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THE MONK:

A

ROMANCE.

By M. G. LEWIS, Esq. M. P.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. III.

Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque.

HORAT.

Dreams, magic terrors, spells of mighty power,
Witches, and ghosts who rove at midnight hour.

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THE MONK.

CHAP. VIII.

The crickets ſing, and man's o'erlaboured ſenſe
Repairs itſelf by reſt: our Tarquin thus
Did ſoftly preſs the ruſhes, ere he wakened
The chaſtity he wounded——Cytherea,
How bravely thou becom'ſt thy bed! Freſh lily!
And whiter than the ſheets!

CYMBELINE.

ALL the reſearches of the marquis de las Ciſternas proved vain. Agnes was loſt to him for ever. Deſpair produced ſo violent an effect upon his conſtitution, that the conſequence was a long and ſevere illneſs. This prevented him from viſiting Elvira, as he had intended; and ſhe being ignorant of the cauſe of his neglect, it gave her no trifling uneaſineſs. His ſiſter's death

had prevented Lorenzo from communicating to his uncle his deſigns reſpecting Antonia. The injunctions of her mother forbade his preſenting himſelf to her without the duke's conſent; and as ſhe heard no more of him or his propoſals, Elvira conjectured that he had either met with a better match, or had been commanded to give up all thoughts of her daughter. Every day made her more uneaſy reſpecting Antonia's fate; yet, while ſhe retained the abbot's protection, ſhe bore with fortitude the diſappointment of her hopes with regard to Lorenzo and the marquis. That reſource now failed her. She was convinced that Ambroſio had meditated her daughter's ruin; and when ſhe reflected that her death would leave Antonia friendleſs and unprotected in a world ſo baſe, ſo perfidious and depraved, her heart ſwelled with the bitterneſs of apprehenſion. At ſuch times ſhe would ſit for hours gazing upon the lovely girl, and ſeeming to liſten to her innocent prattle, while in reality her thoughts dwelt upon

upon the ſorrows into which a moment would ſuffice to plunge her. Then ſhe would claſp her in her arms ſuddenly, lean her head upon her daughter's boſom, and bedew it with her tears.

An event was in preparation, which, had ſhe known it, would have relieved her from her inquietude. Lorenzo now waited only for a favourable opportunity to inform the duke of his intended marriage: however, a circumſtance which occurred at this period obliged him to delay his explanation for a few days longer.

Don Raymond's malady ſeemed to gain ground. Lorenzo was conſtantly at his bed-ſide, and treated him with a tenderneſs truly fraternal. Both the cauſe and effects of the diſorder were highly afflicting to the brother of Agnes; yet Theodore's grief was ſcarcely leſs ſincere. That amiable boy quitted not his maſter for a moment, and put every means in practice to conſole and alleviate his ſufferings. The marquis had conceived ſo rooted an affection for his de-

ceaſed miſtreſs, that it was evident to all that he never could ſurvive her loſs. Nothing could have prevented him from ſinking under his grief, but the perſuaſion of her being ſtill alive, and in need of his aſſiſtance. Though convinced of its falſehood, his attendants encouraged him in a belief which formed his only comfort. He was aſſured daily, that freſh perquiſitions were making reſpecting the fate of Agnes; ſtories were invented recounting the various attempts made to get admittance into the convent; and circumſtances were related, which, though they did not promiſe her abſolute recovery, at leaſt were ſufficient to keep his hopes alive. The marquis conſtantly fell into the moſt terrible acceſs of paſſion, when informed of the failure of theſe ſuppoſed attempts. Still he would not credit that the ſucceeding ones would have the ſame fate, but flattered himſelf that the next would prove more fortunate.

Theodore was the only one who exerted himſelf

himſelf to realize his maſter's chimeras. He was eternally buſied in planning ſchemes for entering the convent, or at leaſt of obtaining from the nuns ſome intelligence of Agnes. To execute theſe ſchemes was the only inducement which could prevail on him to quit Don Raymond. He became a very Proteus, changing his ſhape every day; but all his metamorphoſes were to very little purpoſe. He regularly returned to the palace de las Ciſternas without any intelligence to confirm his maſter's hopes. One day he took it into his head to diſguiſe himſelf as a beggar; he put a patch over his left eye, took his guitar in hand, and poſted himſelf at the gate of the convent.

"If Agnes is really confined in the convent," thought he, "and hears my voice, ſhe will recollect it, and poſſibly may find means to let me know that ſhe is here."

With this idea he mingled with a crowd of beggars who aſſembled daily at the gate of St. Clare to receive ſoup, which the nuns

were accuſtomed to diſtribute at twelve o'clock. All were provided with jugs or bowls to carry it away; but as Theodore had no utenſil of this kind, he begged leave to eat his portion at the convent door. This was granted without difficulty. His ſweet voice, and, in ſpite of his patched eye, his engaging countenance, won the heart of the good old portereſs, who, aided by a lay-ſiſter, was buſied in ſerving to each his meſs. Theodore was bid to ſtay till the others ſhould depart, and promiſed that his requeſt ſhould then be granted. The youth deſired no better, ſince it was not to eat ſoup that he preſented himſelf at the convent. He thanked the portereſs for her permiſſion, retired from the door, and, ſeating himſelf upon a large ſtone, amuſed himſelf in tuning his guitar while the beggars were ſerved.

As ſoon as the crowd was gone, Theodore was beckoned to the gate, and deſired to come in. He obeyed with infinite readineſs, but affected great reſpect at paſſing the hallowed

hallowed threſhold, and to be much daunted by the preſence of the reverend ladies. His feigned timidity flattered the vanity of the nuns, who endeavoured to re-aſſure him. The portereſs took him into her own little parlour: in the mean while, the lay-ſiſter went to the kitchen, and ſoon returned with a double portion of food better quality than what was given to the beggars. His hoſteſs added ſome fruits and confections from her own private ſtore, and both encouraged the youth to dine heartily. To all theſe attentions he replied with much ſeeming gratitude, and abundance of bleſſings upon his benefactreſſes. While he ate, the nuns admired the delicacy of his features, the beauty of his hair, and the ſweetneſs and grace which accompanied all his actions. They lamented to each other in whiſpers, that ſo charming a youth ſhould be expoſed to the ſeductions of the world, and agreed that he would be a worthy pillar of the catholic church. They concluded their conference

by reſolving, that heaven would be rendered a real ſervice, if they entreated the prioreſs to intercede with Ambroſio for the beggar's admiſſion into the order of capuchins.

This being determined, the porteref, who was a perſon of great influence in the convent, poſted away in all haſte to the domina's cell. Here ſhe made ſo flaming a narrative of Theodore's merits, that the old lady grew curious to ſee him. Accordingly the portereſs was commiſſioned to convey him to the parlour-grate. In the interim, the ſuppoſed beggar was ſifting the lay-ſiſter with reſpect to the fate of Agnes: her evidence only corroborated the domina's aſſertions. She ſaid, that Agnes had been taken ill on returning from confeſſion, had never quitted her bed from that moment, and that ſhe had herſelf been preſent at the funeral. She even atteſted having ſeen her dead body, and aſſiſted with her own hands in adjuſting it upon the bier. This account diſcouraged Theodore; yet, as he had puſh-

ed

ed the adventure ſo far, he reſolved to witneſs its concluſion.

The portereſs now returned, and ordered him to follow her. He obeyed, and was conducted into the parlour, where the lady prioreſs was already poſted at the grate. The nuns ſurrounded her, who all flocked with eagerneſs to a ſcene which promiſed ſome diverſion. Theodore ſaluted them with profound reſpect, and his preſence had the power to ſmooth for a moment even the ſtern brow of the ſuperior. She aſked ſeveral queſtions reſpecting his parents, his religion, and what had reduced him to a ſtate of beggary. To theſe demands his anſwers were perfectly ſatisfactory and perfectly falſe. He was then aſked his opinion of a monaſtic life. He replied in terms of high eſtimation and reſpect for it. Upon this the prioreſs told him, that his obtaining an entrance into a religious order was not impoſſible; that her recommendation would not permit his poverty to be an obſtacle; and that, if ſhe found him

deſerving it, he might depend in future upon her protection. Theodore aſſured her, that to merit her favour would be his higheſt ambition; and having ordered him to return next day, when ſhe would talk with him further, the domina quitted the parlour.

The nuns, whom reſpect for the ſuperior had till then kept ſilent, now crowded all together to the grate, and aſſailed the youth with a multitude of queſtions. He had already examined each with attention. Alas! Agnes was not amongſt them. The nuns heaped queſtion upon queſtion ſo thickly, that it was ſcarcely poſſible for him to reply. One aſked where he was born, ſince his accent declared him to be a foreigner: another wanted to know why he wore a patch upon his left eye: ſiſter Helena enquired whether he had not a ſiſter like him, becauſe ſhe ſhould like ſuch a companion: and ſiſter Rachael was fully perſuaded that the brother would be the pleaſanter companion of the two. Theodore amuſed himſelf

ſelf with relating to the credulous nuns, for truths, all the ſtrange ſtories which his imagination could invent. He related to them his ſuppoſed adventures, and penetrated every auditor with aſtoniſhment, while he talked of giants, ſavages, ſhipwrecks, and iſlands inhabited

" By anthropophagi, and men whoſe heads
" Do grow beneath their ſhoulders,"

with many other circumſtances to the full as remarkable. He ſaid that he was born in Terra Incognita, was educated at an Hottentot univerſity, and had paſſed two years among the Americans of Sileſia.

" For what regards the loſs of my eye," ſaid he, " it was a juſt puniſhment upon me for diſreſpect to the Virgin, when I made my ſecond pilgrimage to Loretto. I ſtood near the altar in the miraculous chapel: the monks were proceeding to array the ſtatue in her beſt apparel. The pilgrims were ordered to cloſe their eyes during this ceremony; but though by nature extremely re-

ligious, curioſity was too powerful. At the moment . . . . . I ſhall penetrate you with horror, reverend ladies, when I reveal my crime! . . . . At the moment that the monks were changing her ſhift, I ventured to open my left eye, and gave a little peep towards the ſtatue. That look was my laſt! The glory which ſurrounded the Virgin was too great to be ſupported. I haſtily ſhut my ſacrilegious eye, and never have been able to unclose it ſince!"

At the relation of this miracle the nuns all croſſed themſelves, and promiſed to intercede with the bleſſed Virgin for the recovery of his ſight. They expreſſed their wonder at the extent of his travels, and at the ſtrange adventures which he had met with at ſo early an age. They now remarked his guitar, and enquired whether he was an adept in muſic. He replied with modeſty, that it was not for him to decide upon his talents, but requeſted permiſſion to appeal to them as judges. This was granted without difficulty.

"But

"But at leaſt," ſaid the old portereſs, "take care not to ſing any thing profane."

"You may depend upon my diſcretion," replied Theodore; "you ſhall hear how dangerous it is for young women to abandon themſelves to their paſſions, illuſtrated by the adventure of a damſel, who fell ſuddenly in love with an unknown knight."

"But is the adventure true?" enquired the portereſs.

"Every word of it. It happened in Denmark; and the heroine was thought ſo beautiful, that ſhe was known by no other name than that of "the lovely maid."

"In Denmark, ſay you?" mumbled an old nun: "Are not the people all blacks in Denmark?"

"By no means, reverend lady; they are of a delicate pea-green, with flame-coloured hair and whiſkers."

"Mother of God! Pea-green?" exclaimed ſiſter Helena: "Oh! 'tis impoſſible!"

"Impoſſible!" ſaid the portereſs, with a look

look of contempt and exultation: "Not at all: when I was a young woman, I remember ſeeing ſeveral of them myſelf."

Theodore now put his inſtrument in proper order. He had read the ſtory of a king of England, whoſe priſon was diſcovered by a minſtrel; and he hoped that the ſame ſcheme would enable him to diſcover Agnes, ſhould ſhe be in the convent. He choſe a ballad, which ſhe had taught him herſelf in the caſtle of Lindenberg: ſhe might poſſibly catch the ſound, and he hoped to hear her replying to ſome of the ſtanzas. His guitar was now in tune, and he prepared to ſtrike it.

"But, before I begin," ſaid he, "it is neceſſary to inform you, ladies, that this ſame Denmark is terribly infeſted by ſorcerers, witches, and evil ſpirits. Every element poſſeſſes its appropriate dæmons. The woods are haunted by a malignant power, called "The Erl, or Oak-King:" he it is who blights the trees, ſpoils the harveſt, and commands the imps and goblins.

lins. He appears in the form of an old man of majeſtic figure, with a golden crown, and long white beard. His principal amuſement is to entice young children from their parents; and as ſoon as he gets them into his cave, he tears them into a thouſand pieces. The rivers are governed by another fiend, called "The Water-King:" his province is to agitate the deep, occaſion ſhipwrecks, and drag the drowning ſailors beneath the waves. He wears the appearance of a warrior, and employs himſelf in luring young virgins into his ſnare: what he does with them, when he catches them in the water, reverend ladies, I leave for you to imagine. "The Fire-King" ſeems to be a man all formed of flames: he raiſes the meteors and wandering lights, which beguile travellers into ponds and marſhes, and he directs the lightning where it may do moſt miſchief. The laſt of theſe elementary dæmons is called "The Cloud-King:" his figure is that of a beautiful youth, and he is diſtinguiſhed by two large

fable wings: though his outſide is ſo enchanting, he is not a bit better diſpoſed than the others. He is continually employed in raiſing ſtorms, tearing up foreſts by the roots, and blowing caſtles and convents about the ears of their inhabitants. The firſt has a daughter, who is queen of the elves and fairies: the ſecond has a mother, who is a powerful enchantreſs. Neither of theſe ladies are worth more than the gentlemen. I do not remember to have heard any family aſſigned to the two other dæmons, but at preſent I have no buſineſs with any of them except the fiend of the waters. He is the hero of my ballad; but I thought it neceſſary, before I began, to give you ſome account of his proceedings."

Theodore then played a ſhort ſymphony; after which, ſtretching his voice to its utmoſt extent, to facilitate its reaching the ear of Agnes, he ſung the following ſtanzas:

THE

THE WATER-KING.

A DANISH BALLAD.

WITH gentle murmur flowed the tide,
While by the fragrant flowery ſide
The lovely maid, with carols gay,
To Mary's church purſued her way.

The water-fiend's malignant eye
Along the banks beheld her hie;
Straight to his mother-witch he ſped,
And thus in ſuppliant accents ſaid:

"Oh! mother! mother! now adviſe,
How I may yonder maid ſurpriſe:
Oh! mother! mother! now explain,
How I may yonder maid obtain."

The witch, ſhe gave him armour white;
She formed him like a gallant knight;
Of water clear next made her hand
A ſteed, whoſe houſings were of ſand.

The water-king then ſwift he went;
To Mary's church his ſteps he bent:
He bound his courſer to the door,
And paced the church-yard three times four.

His courſer to the door bound he,
And paced the church-yard four times three:

Then

Then haſtened up the aiſle, where all
The people flocked, both great and ſmall.

The prieſt ſaid, as the knight drew near,
" And wherefore comes the white chief here ?"
The lovely maid, ſhe ſmiled aſide ;
" Oh ! would I were the white chief's bride !"

He ſtepped o'er benches one and two ;
" Oh ! lovely maid, I die for you !"
He ſtepped o'er benches two and three ;
" Oh ! lovely maiden, go with me !"

Then ſweet ſhe ſmiled, the lovely maid ;
And while ſhe gave her hand, ſhe ſaid,
" Betide me joy, betide me woe,
O'er hill, o'er dale, with thee I go."

The prieſt their hands together joins :
They dance, while clear the moon-beam ſhines ;
And little thinks the maiden bright,
Her partner is the water-ſpright.

Oh ! had ſome ſpirit deigned to ſing,
" Your bride-groom is the water-king !"
The maid had fear and hate confeſſed,
And curſed the hand which then ſhe preſſed.

But nothing giving cauſe to think
How near ſhe ſtrayed to danger's brink,

Still

Still on ſhe went, and hand in hand
The lovers reached the yellow ſand.

" Aſcend this ſteed with me, my dear!
We needs muſt croſs the ſtreamlet here:
Ride boldly in; it is not deep;
The winds are huſhed, the billows ſleep."

Thus ſpoke the water-king. The maid
Her traitor bride-groom's wiſh obeyed:
And ſoon ſhe ſaw the courſer lave
Delighted in his parent wave.

" Stop! ſtop! my love! The waters blue
E'en now my ſhrinking foot bedew."
" Oh! lay aſide your fears, ſweet heart!
We now have reached the deepeſt part."

" Stop! ſtop! my love! For now I ſee
The waters riſe above my knee."
" Oh! lay aſide your fears, ſweet heart!
We now have reached the deepeſt part."

" Stop! ſtop! for God's ſake, ſtop! For, oh!
The waters o'er my boſom flow!"—
Scarce was the word pronounced, when knight
And courſer vaniſhed from her ſight.

She ſhrieks, but ſhrieks in vain; for high
The wild winds riſing dull the cry;

The

The fiend exults; the billows daſh,
And o'er their hapleſs victim waſh.

Three times, while ſtruggling with the ſtream,
The lovely maid was heard to ſcream;
But when the tempeſt's rage was o'er,
The lovely maid was ſeen no more.

Warned by this tale, ye damſels fair,
To whom you give your love beware!
Believe not every handſome knight,
And dance not with the water-ſpright!

The youth ceaſed to ſing. The nuns were delighted with the ſweetneſs of his voice, and maſterly manner of touching the inſtrument: but however acceptable this applauſe would have been at any other time, at preſent it was inſipid to Theodore. His artifice had not ſucceeded. He paused in vain between the ſtanzas; no voice replied to his, and he abandoned the hope of equalling Blondel.

The convent-bell now warned the nuns that it was time to aſſemble in the refectory. They were obliged to quit the grate: they

they thanked the youth for the entertainment which his muſic had afforded them, and charged him to return the next day. This he promiſed. The nuns, to give him the greater inclination to keep his word, told him that he might always depend upon the convent for his meals, and each of them made him ſome little preſent. One gave him a box of ſweetmeats; another, an agnus dei; ſome brought reliques of ſaints, waxen images, and conſecrated croſſes; and others preſented him with pieces of theſe works in which the religious excel, ſuch as embroidery, artificial flowers, lace, and needle-work. All theſe he was adviſed to ſell, in order to put himſelf into better caſe; and he was aſſured that it would be eaſy to diſpoſe of them, ſince the Spaniards hold the performances of the nuns in high eſtimation. Having received theſe gifts with ſeeming reſpect and gratitude, he remarked, that, having no baſket, he knew not how to convey them away. Several of the nuns were haſtening in ſearch of one, when

when they were ſtopped by the return of an elderly woman, whom Theodore had not till then obſerved. Her mild countenance and reſpectable air prejudiced him immediately in her favour.

" Hah!" ſaid the portereſs, " here comes the mother St. Urſula with a baſket."

The nun approached the grate, and preſented the baſket to Theodore: it was of willow, lined with blue ſatin, and upon the four ſides were painted ſcenes from the legend of St. Genevieve.

" Here is my gift," ſaid ſhe, as ſhe gave it into his hand: " Good youth, deſpiſe it not. Though its value ſeems inſignificant, it has many hidden virtues."

She accompanied theſe words with an expreſſive look. It was not loſt upon Theodore. In receiving the preſent, he drew as near the grate as poſſible.

" Agnes!" ſhe whiſpered in a voice ſcarcely intelligible.

Theodore, however, caught the ſound. He concluded that ſome myſtery was concealed

cealed in the baſket, and his heart beat with impatience and joy. At this moment the domina returned. Her air was gloomy and frowning, and ſhe looked if poſſible more ſtern than ever.

" Mother St. Urſula, I would ſpeak with you in private."

The nun changed colour, and was evidently diſconcerted.

" With me ?" ſhe replied in a faltering voice.

The domina motioned that ſhe muſt follow her, and retired. The mother St. Urſula obeyed her. Soon after, the refectory bell ringing a ſecond time, the nuns quitted the grate, and Theodore was left at liberty to carry off his prize. Delighted that at length he had obtained ſome intelligence for the marquis, he flew rather than ran till he reached the hotel de las Ciſternas. In a few minutes he ſtood by his maſter's bed with the baſket in his hand. Lorenzo was in the chamber, endeavouring to reconcile

cile his friend to a misfortune which he felt himself but too severely. Theodore related his adventure, and the hopes which had been created by the mother St. Ursula's gift. The marquis started from his pillow. That fire which since the death of Agnes had been extinguished, now revived in his bosom, and his eyes sparkled with the eagerness of expectation. The emotions which Lorenzo's countenance betrayed were scarcely weaker, and he waited with inexpressible impatience for the solution of this mystery. Raymond caught the basket from the hands of his page: he emptied the contents upon the bed, and examined them with minute attention. He hoped that a letter would be found at the bottom. Nothing of the kind appeared. The search was resumed, and still with no better success. At length Don Raymond observed, that one corner of the blue satin lining was unripped: he tore it open hastily, and drew forth a small scrap of paper, neither

ther folded or ſealed. It was addreſſed to the marquis de las Ciſternas, and the contents were as follow:

"Having recogniſed your page, I venture to ſend theſe few lines. Procure an order from the cardinal-duke for ſeizing my perſon, and that of the domina; but let it not be executed till Friday at midnight. It is the feſtival of St. Clare: there will be a proceſſion of nuns by torch-light, and I ſhall be among them. Beware, not to let your intention be known. Should a ſyllable be dropped to excite the domina's ſuſpicions, you will never hear of me more. Be cautious, if you prize the memory of Agnes, and wiſh to puniſh her aſſaſſins. I have that to tell, will freeze your blood with horror. ST. URSULA."

No ſooner had the marquis read the note, than he fell back upon his pillow, deprived of ſenſe or motion. The hope failed him which till now had ſupported his exiſtence;

and theſe lines convinced him but too poſitively that Agnes was indeed no more. Lorenzo felt this circumſtance leſs forcibly, ſince it had always been his idea that his ſiſter had periſhed by unfair means. When he found by the mother St. Urſula's letter how true were his ſuſpicions, the confirmation excited no other ſentiment in his boſom than a wiſh to puniſh the murderers as they deſerved. It was no eaſy taſk to recall the marquis to himſelf. As ſoon as he recovered his ſpeech, he broke out into execrations againſt the aſſaſſins of his beloved, and vowed to take upon them a ſignal vengeance. He continued to rave and torment himſelf with impotent paſſion, till his conſtitution, enfeebled by grief and illneſs, could ſupport itſelf no longer, and relapſed into inſenſibility. His melancholy ſituation ſincerely affected Lorenzo, who would willingly have remained in the apartment of his friend; but other cares now demanded his preſence. It was neceſſary to procure the order for ſeizing the prioreſs of St. Clare.

For

For this purpoſe, having committed Raymond to the care of the beſt phyſicians in Madrid, he quitted the hotel de las Ciſternas, and bent his courſe towards the palace of the cardinal-duke.

His diſappointment was exceſſive, when he found that affairs of ſtate had obliged the cardinal to ſet out for a diſtant province. It wanted but five days to Friday: yet, by travelling day and night, he hoped to return in time for the pilgrimage of St. Clare. In this he ſucceeded. He found the cardinal-duke, and repreſented to him the ſuppoſed culpability of the prioreſs, as alſo the violent effects which it had produced upon Don Raymond. He could have uſed no argument ſo forcible as this laſt. Of all his nephews the marquis was the only one to whom the cardinal-duke was ſincerely attached: he perfectly doted upon him, and the prioreſs could have committed no greater crime in his eyes, than to have endangered the life of the marquis. Conſequently, he granted the order of arreſt

without difficulty. He alſo gave Lorenzo a letter to a principal officer of the Inquiſition, deſiring him to ſee his mandate executed. Furniſhed with theſe papers, Medina haſtened back to Madrid, which he reached on the Friday a few hours before dark. He found the marquis ſomewhat eaſier, but ſo weak and exhauſted, that without great exertion he could neither ſpeak nor move. Having paſſed an hour by his bed-ſide, Lorenzo left him to communicate his deſign to his uncle, as alſo to give Don Ramirez de Mello the cardinal's letter. The firſt was petrified with horror, when he learned the fate of his unhappy niece. He encouraged Lorenzo to puniſh her aſſaſſins, and engaged to accompany him at night to St. Clare's convent. Don Ramirez promiſed his firmeſt ſupport, and ſelected a band of truſty archers to prevent oppoſition on the part of the populace.

But while Lorenzo was anxious to unmaſk one religious hypocrite, he was unconſcious of the ſorrows prepared for him

by another. Aided by Matilda's infernal agents, Ambrofio had reſolved upon the innocent Antonia's ruin. The moment deſtined to be ſo fatal to her arrived. She had taken leave of her mother for the night. As ſhe kiſſed her, ſhe felt an unuſual deſpondency infuſe itſelf into her boſom. She left her, and returned to her inſtantly, threw herſelf into her maternal arms, and bathed her cheek with tears. She felt uneaſy at quitting her, and a ſecret preſentiment aſſured her that never muſt they meet again. Elvira obſerved, and tried to laugh her out of this childiſh prejudice. She chid her mildly for encouraging ſuch ungrounded ſadneſs, and warned her how dangerous it was to give way to ſuch ideas.

To all her remonſtrances ſhe received no other anſwer than——

"Mother! Dear mother! Oh! would to God it were morning!"

Elvira, whoſe inquietude reſpecting her daughter was a great obſtacle to her perfect re-eſtabliſhment, was ſtill labouring under

the effects of her late ſevere illneſs. She was this evening more than uſually indiſpoſed, and retired to bed before her accuſtomed hour. Antonia withdrew from her mother's chamber with regret, and, till the door cloſed, kept her eyes fixed upon her with melancholy expreſſion. She retired to her own apartment: her heart was filled with bitterneſs. It ſeemed to her that all her proſpects were blaſted, and the world contained nothing for which it was worth exiſting. She ſank into a chair, reclined her head upon her arm, and gazed upon the floor with a vacant ſtare, while the moſt gloomy images floated before her fancy. She was ſtill in this ſtate of inſenſibility, when ſhe was diſturbed by hearing a ſtrain of ſoft muſic breathed beneath her window. She roſe, drew near the caſement, and opened it to hear it more diſtinctly. Having thrown her veil over her face, ſhe ventured to look out. By the light of the moon ſhe perceived ſeveral men below with guitars and lutes in their hands; and at a little diſtance from them

them ſtood another wrapped in his cloak, whoſe ſtature and appearance bore a ſtrong reſemblance to Lorenzo's. She was not deceived in this conjecture. It was indeed Lorenzo himſelf, who, bound by his word not to preſent himſelf to Antonia without his uncle's conſent, endeavoured, by occaſional ſerenades, to convince his miſtreſs that his attachment ſtill exiſted. His ſtratagem had not the deſired effect. Antonia was far from ſuppoſing that this nightly muſic was intended as a compliment to her. She was too modeſt to think herſelf worthy ſuch attentions; and concluding them to be addreſſed to ſome neighbouring lady, ſhe grieved to find that they were offered by Lorenzo.

The air which was played was plaintive and melodious. It accorded with the ſtate of Antonia's mind, and ſhe liſtened with pleaſure. After a ſymphony of ſome length, it was ſucceeded by the ſound of voices, and Antonia diſtinguiſhed the following words:

SERENADE.

CHORUS.

OH! breathe in gentle ſtrain, my lyre!
'Tis here that beauty loves to reſt:
Deſcribe the pangs of fond deſire,
Which rend a faithful lover's breaſt.

SONG.

In every heart to find a ſlave,
In every ſoul to fix his reign,
In bonds to lead the wiſe and brave,
And make the captives kiſs his chain;
Such is the power of Love, and oh!
I grieve ſo well Love's power to know.

In ſighs to paſs the live-long day,
To taſte a ſhort and broken ſleep,
For one dear object far away,
All bathers ſcorned, to watch and weep;
Such are the pains of Love, and oh!
I grieve ſo well Love's pains to know.

To read conſent in virgin eyes,
To preſs the lip ne'er preſt till then,
To hear the ſigh of tranſport riſe,
And kiſs, and kiſs, and kiſs again;
Such are thy pleaſures, Love, but oh!
When ſhall my heart thy pleaſures know?

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Now huſh, my lyre! My voice, be ſtill!
Sleep, gentle maid! May fond deſire
With amorous thoughts thy viſions fill,
Though ſtill my voice, and huſhed my lyre!

The muſic ceaſed: the performers diſperſed, and ſilence prevailed through the ſtreet. Antonia quitted the window with regret. She, as uſual, recommended herſelf to the protection of St. Roſolia, ſaid her accuſtomed prayers, and retired to bed. Sleep was not long abſent, and his preſence relieved her from her terrors and inquietude.

It was almoſt two o'clock before the luſtful monk ventured to bend his ſteps towards Antonia's dwelling. It has been already mentioned, that the abbey was at no great diſtance from the ſtrada di San Iago. He reached the houſe unobſerved. Here he ſtopped, and heſitated for a moment. He reflected on the enormity of the crime, the conſequences of a diſcovery, and

the probability, after what had paſſed, of Elvira's ſuſpecting him to be her daughter's raviſher. On the other hand it was ſuggeſted, that ſhe could do no more than ſuſpect; that no proofs of his guilt could be produced; that it would ſeem impoſſible for the rape to have been committed without Antonia's knowing when, where, or by whom; and finally, he believed that his fame was too firmly eſtabliſhed to be ſhaken by the unſupported accuſations of two unknown women. This latter argument was perfectly falſe. He knew not how uncertain is the air of popular applauſe, and that a moment ſuffices to make him to-day the deteſtation of the world, who yeſterday was its idol. The reſult of the monk's deliberations was, that he ſhould proceed in his enterpriſe. He aſcended the ſteps leading to the houſe. No ſooner did he touch the door with the ſilver myrtle, than it flew open, and preſented him with a free paſſage. He entered, and the door cloſed after him of its own accord.

Guided

Guided by the moon-beams, he proceeded up the ſtair-caſe with ſlow and cautious ſteps. He looked round him every moment with apprehenſion and anxiety. He ſaw a ſpy in every ſhadow, and heard a voice in every murmur of the night-breeze. Conſciouſneſs of the guilty buſineſs on which he was employed appalled his heart, and rendered it more timid than a woman's. Yet ſtill he proceeded. He reached the door of Antonia's chamber. He ſtopped, and liſtened. All was huſhed within. The total ſilence perſuaded him that his intended victim was retired to reſt, and he ventured to lift up the latch. The door was faſtened, and reſiſted his efforts. But no ſooner was it touched by the taliſman, than the bolt flew back. The raviſher ſtepped on, and found himſelf in the chamber, where ſlept the innocent girl, unconſcious how dangerous a viſitor was drawing near her couch. The door cloſed after him, and the bolt ſhot again into its faſtening.

Ambroſio advanced with precaution. He took care that not a board ſhould creak under his foot, and held in his breath as he approached the bed. His firſt attention was to perform the magic ceremony, as Matilda had charged him: he breathed thrice upon the ſilver myrtle, pronounced over it Antonia's name, and laid it upon her pillow. The effects which it had already produced, permitted not his doubting its ſucceſs in prolonging the ſlumbers of his devoted miſtreſs. No ſooner was the inchantment performed, than he conſidered her to be abſolutely in his power, and his eyes flaſhed with luſt and impatience. He now ventured to caſt a glance upon the ſleeping beauty. A ſingle lamp, burning before the ſtatue of St. Roſolia, ſhed a faint light through the room, and permitted him to examine all the charms of the lovely object before him. The heat of the weather had obliged her to throw off part of the bed-clothes. Thoſe which ſtill covered her Ambroſio's inſolent hand haſtened to

remove.

remove. She lay with her cheek reclining upon one ivory arm: the other reſted on the ſide of the bed with graceful indolence. A few treſſes of her hair had eſcaped from beneath the muſlin which confined the reſt, and fell careleſsly over her boſom, as it heaved with ſlow and regular ſuſpiration. The warm air had ſpread her cheek with higher colour than uſual. A ſmile inexpreſſibly ſweet played round her ripe and coral lips, from which every now and then eſcaped a gentle ſigh, or an half-pronounced ſentence. An air of enchanting innocence and candour pervaded her whole form; and there was a ſort of modeſty in her very nakedneſs, which added freſh ſtings to the deſires of the luſtful monk.

He remained for ſome moments devouring thoſe charms with his eyes, which ſoon were to be ſubjected to his ill-regulated paſſions. Her mouth half opened ſeemed to ſolicit a kiſs: he bent over her: he joined his lips to hers, and drew in the fragrance of her breath with rapture. This momentary

tary pleaſure increaſed his longing for ſtill greater. His deſires were raiſed to that frantic height by which brutes are agitated. He reſolved not to delay for one inſtant longer the accompliſhment of his wiſhes, and haſtily proceeded to tear off thoſe garments which impeded the gratification of his luſt.

"Gracious God!" exclaimed a voice behind him: "Am I not deceived? Is not this an illuſion?"

Terror, confuſion, and diſappointment accompanied theſe words, as they ſtruck Ambroſio's hearing. He ſtarted, and turned towards it. Elvira ſtood at the door of the chamber, and regarded the monk with looks of ſurpriſe and deteſtation.

A frightful dream had repreſented to her Antonia on the verge of a precipice. She ſaw her trembling on the brink: every moment ſeemed to threaten her fall, and ſhe heard her exclaim with ſhrieks, "Save me, mother! ſave me!—Yet a moment, and it will be too late." Elvira woke in terror.

The viſion had made too ſtrong an impreſſion upon her mind, to permit her reſting till aſſured of her daughter's ſafety. She haſtily ſtarted from her bed, threw on a looſe night-gown, and, paſſing through the cloſet in which ſlept the waiting-woman, reached Antonia's chamber juſt in time to reſcue her from the graſp of the raviſher.

His ſhame and her amazement ſeemed to have petrified into ſtatues both Elvira and the monk. They remained gazing upon each other in ſilence. The lady was the firſt to recover herſelf.

"It is no dream," ſhe cried: "it is really Ambróſio, who ſtands before me. It is the man whom Madrid eſteems a ſaint, that I find at this late hour near the couch of my unhappy child. Monſter of hypocriſy! I already ſuſpected your deſigns, but forbore your accuſation in pity to human frailty. Silence would now be criminal. The whole city ſhall be informed of your incontinence. I will unmaſk you, villain, and convince the

church

church what a viper ſhe cheriſhes in her boſom."

Pale and confuſed, the baffled culprit ſtood trembling before her. He would fain have extenuated his offence, but could find no apology for his conduct. He could produce nothing but broken ſentences, and excuſes which contradicted each other. Elvira was too juſtly incenſed to grant the pardon which he requeſted. She proteſted that ſhe would raiſe the neighbourhood, and make him an example to all future hypocrites. Then haſtening to the bed, ſhe called to Antonia to wake; and finding that her voice had no effect, ſhe took her arm, and raiſed her forcibly from the pillow. The charm operated too powerfully. Antonia remained inſenſible; and, on being releaſed by her mother, ſank back upon the pillow.

"This ſlumber cannot be natural," cried the amazed Elvira, whoſe indignation increaſed with every moment: "ſome myſtery is concealed in it. But tremble, hypocrite! All your villainy ſhall ſoon be unravelled.

led. Help! help!" ſhe exclaimed aloud: "Within there! Flora! Flora!"

"Hear me for one moment, lady!" cried the monk, reſtored to himſelf by the urgency of the danger: "by all that is ſacred and holy, I ſwear that your daughter's honour is ſtill unviolated. Forgive my tranſgreſſion! Spare me the ſhame of a diſcovery, and permit me to regain the abbey undiſturbed. Grant me this requeſt in mercy! I promiſe not only that Antonia ſhall be ſecure from me in future, but that the reſt of my life ſhall prove——"

Elvira interrupted him abruptly.

"Antonia ſecure from you? *I* will ſecure her. You ſhall betray no longer the confidence of parents. Your iniquity ſhall be unveiled to the public eye. All Madrid ſhall ſhudder at your perfidy, your hypocriſy, and incontinence. What ho! there! Flora! Flora! I ſay,"

While ſhe ſpoke thus, the remembrance of Agnes ſtruck upon his mind. Thus had ſhe ſued to him for mercy, and thus had

he

he refuſed her prayer! It was now his turn to ſuffer, and he could not but acknowledge that his puniſhment was juſt. In the mean while Elvira continued to call Flora to her aſſiſtance; but her voice was ſo choked with paſſion, that the ſervant, who was buried in profound ſlumber, was inſenſible to all her cries: Elvira dared not go towards the cloſet in which Flora ſlept, leſt the monk ſhould take that opportunity to eſcape. Such indeed was his intention: he truſted that, could he reach the abbey unobſerved by any other than Elvira, her ſingle teſtimony would not ſuffice to ruin a reputation ſo well eſtabliſhed as his was in Madrid. With this idea he gathered up ſuch garments as he had already thrown off, and haſtened towards the door. Elvira was aware of his deſign: ſhe followed him, and, ere he could draw back the bolt, ſeized him by the arm, and detained him.

"Attempt not to fly!" ſaid ſhe: "you quit not this room without witneſſes of your guilt."

Ambroſio

Ambroſio ſtruggled in vain to diſengage himſelf. Elvira quitted not her hold, but redoubled her cries for ſuccour. The friar's danger grew more urgent. He expected every moment to hear people aſſembling at her voice; and, worked up to madneſs by the approach of ruin, he adopted a reſolution equally deſperate and ſavage. Turning round ſuddenly, with one hand he graſped Elvira's throat ſo as to prevent her continuing her clamour, and with the other daſhing her violently upon the ground, he dragged her towards the bed. Confuſed by this unexpected attack, ſhe ſcarcely had power to ſtrive at forcing herſelf from his graſp: while the monk, ſnatching the pillow from beneath her daughter's head, covering with it Elvira's face, and preſſing his knee upon her ſtomach with all his ſtrength, endeavoured to put an end to her exiſtence. He ſucceeded but too well. Her natural ſtrength increaſed by the exceſs of anguiſh, long did the ſufferer ſtrug-

gle

gle to diſengage herſelf, but in vain. The monk continued to kneel upon her breaſt, witneſſed without mercy the convulſive trembling of her limbs beneath him, and ſuſtained with inhuman firmneſs the ſpectacle of her agonies, when ſoul and body were on the point of ſeparating. Thoſe agonies at length were over. She ceaſed to ſtruggle for life. The monk took off the pillow, and gazed upon her. Her face was covered with a frightful blackneſs: her limbs moved no more: the blood was chilled in her veins: her heart had forgotten to beat; and her hands were ſtiff and frozen. Ambroſio beheld before him that once noble and majeſtic form, now become a corſe, cold, ſenſeleſs, and diſguſting.

This horrible act was no ſooner perpetrated, than the friar beheld the enormity of his crime. A cold dew flowed over his limbs: his eyes cloſed: he ſtaggered to a chair, and ſank into it almoſt as lifeleſs as the unfortunate who lay extended at his feet.

feet. From this ſtate he was rouſed by the neceſſity of flight, and the danger of being found in Antonia's apartment. He had no deſire to profit by the execution of his crime. Antonia now appeared to him an object of diſguſt. A deadly cold had uſurped the place of that warmth which glowed in his boſom. No ideas offered themſelves to his mind but thoſe of death and guilt, of preſent ſhame and future puniſhment. Agitated by remorſe and fear, he prepared for flight: yet his terrors did not ſo completely maſter his recollection, as to prevent his taking the precautions neceſſary for his ſafety. He replaced the pillow upon the bed, gathered up his garments, and, with the fatal taliſman in his hand, bent his unſteady ſteps towards the door. Bewildered by fear, he fancied that his flight was oppoſed by legions of phantoms. Wherever he turned, the disfigured corſe ſeemed to lie in his paſſage, and it was long before he ſucceeded in reaching the door. The enchanted myrtle produced its former effect.

fect. The door opened, and he haſtened down the ſtair-caſe. He entered the abbey unobſerved; and having ſhut himſelf into his cell, he abandoned his ſoul to the tortures of unavailing remorſe, and terrors of impending detection.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Tell us, ye dead, will none of you in pity
To thoſe you left behind diſcloſe the ſecret?
O! that ſome courteous ghoſt would blab it out,
What 'tis you are, and we muſt ſhortly be!
I've heard, that ſouls departed have ſometimes
Fore-warned men of their deaths: 'twas kindly done,
To knock, and give the alarum.

BLAIR.

AMBROSIO ſhuddered at himſelf when he reflected on his rapid advances in iniquity. The enormous crime which he had juſt committed, filled him with real horror. The murdered Elvira was continually before his eyes, and his guilt was already puniſhed by the agonies of his conſcience. Time, however, conſiderably weakened theſe impreſſions: one day paſſed away; another followed it, and ſtill not the leaſt ſuſpicion

was

was thrown upon him. Impunity reconciled him to his guilt. He began to resume his ſpirits; and as his fears of detection died away, he paid leſs attention to the reproaches of remorſe. Matilda exerted herſelf to quiet his alarms. At the firſt intelligence of Elvira's death, ſhe ſeemed greatly affected, and joined the monk in deploring the unhappy cataſtrophe of his adventure: but when ſhe found his agitation to be ſomewhat calmed, and himſelf better diſpoſed to liſten to her arguments, ſhe proceeded to mention his offence in milder terms, and convince him that he was not ſo highly culpable as he appeared to conſider himſelf. She repreſented, that he had only availed himſelf of the rights which nature allows to every one, thoſe of ſelf-preſervation: that either Elvira or himſelf muſt have periſhed; and that her inflexibility and reſolution to ruin him had deſervedly marked her out for the victim. She next ſtated, that as he had before rendered himſelf ſuſpected to Elvira, it was a

fortunate

fortunate event for him that her lips were cloſed by death; ſince, without this laſt adventure, her ſuſpicions, if made public, might have produced very diſagreeable conſequences. He had therefore freed himſelf from an enemy, to whom the errors of his conduct were ſufficiently known to make her dangerous, and who was the greateſt obſtacle to his deſigns upon Antonia. Thoſe deſigns ſhe encouraged him not to abandon. She aſſured him that, no longer protected by her mother's watchful eye, the daughter would fall an eaſy conqueſt; and by praiſing and enumerating Antonia's charms ſhe ſtrove to rekindle the deſires of the monk. In this endeavour ſhe ſucceeded but too well.

As if the crimes into which his paſſion had ſeduced him had only increaſed its violence, he longed more eagerly than ever to enjoy Antonia. The ſame ſucceſs in concealing his preſent guilt, he truſted, would attend his future. He was deaf to the murmurs of conſcience, and reſolved

to ſatisfy his deſires at any price. He waited only for an opportunity of repeating his former enterpriſe; but to procure that opportunity by the ſame means was now impracticable. In the firſt tranſports of deſpair he had daſhed the enchanted myrtle into a thouſand pieces. Matilda told him plainly, that he muſt expect no further aſſiſtance from the infernal powers, unleſs he was willing to ſubſcribe to their eſtabliſhed conditions. This Ambroſio was determined not to do. He perſuaded himſelf that, however great might be his iniquity, ſo long as he preſerved his claim to ſalvation, he need not deſpair of pardon. He therefore reſolutely refuſed to enter into any bond or compact with the fiends; and Matilda, finding him obſtinate upon this point, forbore to preſs him further. She exerted her invention to diſcover ſome means of putting Antonia into the abbot's power: nor was it long before that means preſented itſelf.

While her ruin was thus meditating, the unhappy girl herſelf ſuffered ſeverely from the

the loſs of her mother. Every morning on waking, it was her firſt care to haſten to Elvira's chamber. On that which followed Ambroſio's fatal viſit, ſhe woke later than was her uſual cuſtom: of this ſhe was convinced by the abbey chimes. She ſtarted from her bed, threw on a few looſe garments haſtily, and was ſpeeding to enquire how her mother had paſſed the night, when her foot ſtruck againſt ſomething which lay in her paſſage. She looked down. What was her horror at recognizing Elvira's livid corſe! She uttered a loud ſhriek, and threw herſelf upon the floor. She claſped the inanimate form to her boſom, felt that it was dead-cold, and, with a movement of diſguſt, of which ſhe was not the miſtreſs, let it fall again from her arms. The cry had alarmed Flora, who haſtened to her aſſiſtance. The ſight which ſhe beheld penetrated her with horror; but her alarm was more audible than Antonia's. She made the houſe ring with her lamentations, while her miſtreſs, almoſt ſuffocated with grief, could only

mark her diſtreſs by ſobs and groans. Flora's ſhrieks ſoon reached the ears of the hoſteſs, whoſe terror and ſurpriſe were exceſſive on learning the cauſe of this diſturbance. A phyſician was immediately ſent for; but, on the firſt moment of beholding the corſe, he declared that Elvira's recovery was beyond the power of art. He proceeded therefore to give his aſſiſtance to Antonia, who by this time was truly in need of it. She was conveyed to bed, while the landlady buſied herſelf in giving orders for Elvira's burial. Dame Jacintha was a plain good kind of woman, charitable, generous, and devout; but her intellects were weak, and ſhe was a miſerable ſlave to fear and ſuperſtition. She ſhuddered at the idea of paſſing the night in the ſame houſe with a dead body. She was perſuaded that Elvira's ghoſt would appear to her; and no leſs certain that ſuch a viſit would kill her with fright. From this perſuaſion, ſhe reſolved to paſs the night at a neighbour's, and inſiſted that the funeral ſhould

take

take place the next day. St. Clare's cemetery being the neareſt, it was determined that Elvira ſhould be buried there. Dame Jacintha engaged to defray every expence attending the burial. She knew not in what circumſtances Antonia was left; but, from the ſparing manner in which the family had lived, ſhe concluded them to be indifferent: conſequently ſhe entertained very little hope of ever being recompenſed. But this conſideration prevented her not from taking care that the interment was performed with decency, and from ſhewing the unfortunate Antonia all poſſible reſpect.

Nobody dies of mere grief; of this Antonia was an inſtance. Aided by her youth and healthy conſtitution, ſhe ſhook off the malady which her mother's death had occaſioned; but it was not ſo eaſy to remove the diſeaſe of her mind. Her eyes were conſtantly filled with tears; every trifle affected her, and ſhe evidently nouriſhed in her boſom a profound and rooted melan-

choly. The ſlighteſt mention of Elvira, the moſt trivial circumſtance recalling that beloved parent to her memory, was ſufficient to throw her into ſerious agitation. How much would her grief have been increaſed, had ſhe known the agonies which terminated her mother's exiſtence! But of this no one entertained the leaſt ſuſpicion. Elvira was ſubject to ſtrong convulſions: it was ſuppoſed that, aware of their approach, ſhe had dragged herſelf to her daughter's chamber in hopes of aſſiſtance; that a ſudden acceſs of her fits had ſeized her, too violent to be reſiſted by her already enfeebled ſtate of health; and that ſhe had expired ere ſhe had time to reach the medicine which generally relieved her, and which ſtood upon a ſhelf in Antonia's room. This idea was firmly credited by the few people who intereſted themſelves about Elvira. Her death was eſteemed a natural event, and ſoon forgotten by all, ſave by her, who had but too much reaſon to deplore her loſs.

In

In truth Antonia's ſituation was ſufficiently embarraſſing and unpleaſant. She was alone, in the midſt of a diſſipated and expenſive city; ſhe was ill provided with money, and worſe with friends. Her aunt Leonella was ſtill at Cordova, and ſhe knew not her direction. Of the marquis de las Cifternas ſhe heard no news. As to Lorenzo, ſhe had long given up the idea of poſſeſſing any intereſt in his boſom. She knew not to whom ſhe could addreſs herſelf in her preſent dilemma. She wiſhed to conſult Ambroſio, but ſhe remembered her mother's injunctions to ſhun him as much as poſſible; and the laſt converſation which Elvira had held with her upon the ſubject, had given her ſufficient lights reſpecting his deſigns, to put her upon her guard againſt him in future. Still all her mother's warnings could not make her change her good opinion of the friar. She continued to feel that his friendſhip and ſociety were requiſite to her happineſs: ſhe looked upon his failings with a partial eye,

and could not perſuade herſelf that he really had intended her ruin. However, Elvira had poſitively commanded her to drop his acquaintance, and ſhe had too much reſpect for her orders to diſobey them.

At length ſhe reſolved to addreſs herſelf for advice and protection to the marquis de las Ciſternas, as being her neareſt relation. She wrote to him, briefly ſtating her deſolate ſituation; ſhe beſought him to compaſſionate his brother's child, to continue to her Elvira's penſion, and to authoriſe her retiring to his old caſtle in Murcia, which till now had been her retreat. Having ſealed her letter, ſhe gave it to the truſty Flora, who immediately ſet out to execute her commiſſion. But Antonia was born under an unlucky ſtar. Had ſhe made her application to the marquis but one day ſooner, received as his niece, and placed at the head of his family, ſhe would have eſcaped all the misfortunes with which ſhe was now threatened. Raymond had

always

always intended to execute this plan: but firſt, his hopes of making the propoſal to Elvira through the lips of Agnes, and afterwards his diſappointment at loſing his intended bride, as well as the ſevere illneſs which for ſome time had confined him to his bed, made him defer from day to day the giving an aſylum in his houſe to his brother's widow. He had commiſſioned Lorenzo to ſupply her liberally with money. But Elvira, unwilling to receive obligations from that nobleman, had aſſured him that ſhe needed no immediate pecuniary aſſiſtance. Conſequently the marquis did not imagine that a trifling delay on his part would create any embarraſſment; and the diſtreſs and agitation of his mind might well excuſe his negligence.

Had he been informed that Elvira's death had left her daughter friendleſs and unprotected, he would doubtleſs have taken ſuch meaſures as would have enſured her from every danger. But Antonia was not deſtined to be ſo fortunate. The day on

which she sent her letter to the palace de las Cisternas, was that following Lorenzo's departure from Madrid. The marquis was in the first paroxysms of despair at the conviction that Agnes was indeed no more: he was delirious; and, his life being in danger, no one was suffered to approach him. Flora was informed that he was incapable of attending to letters, and that probably a few hours would decide his fate. With this unsatisfactory answer she was obliged to return to her mistress, who now found herself plunged into greater difficulties than ever.

Flora and Dame Jacintha exerted themselves to console her. The latter begged her to make herself easy; for that as long as she chose to stay with her she would treat her like her own child. Antonia, finding that the good woman had taken a real affection for her, was somewhat comforted by thinking that she had at least one friend in the world. A letter was now brought to her, directed to Elvira. She recognized

Leonella's

Leonella's writing, and, opening it with joy, found a detailed account of her aunt's adventures at Cordova. She informed her ſiſter that ſhe had recovered her legacy, had loſt her heart, and had received in exchange that of the moſt amiable of apothecaries, paſt, preſent, and to come. She added, that ſhe ſhould be at Madrid on the Tueſday night, and meant to have the pleaſure of preſenting her cato ſpoſo in form. Though her nuptials were far from pleaſing Antonia, Leonella's ſpeedy return gave her niece much delight. She rejoiced in thinking that ſhe ſhould once more be under a relation's care. She could not but judge it to be highly improper for a young woman to be living among abſolute ſtrangers, with no one to regulate her conduct, or protect her from the inſults to which in her defenceleſs ſituation ſhe was expoſed. She therefore looked forward with impatience to the Tueſday night.

It arrived. Antonia liſtened anxiouſly to the carriages as they rolled along the

ſtreet. None of them ſtopped, and it grew late without Leonella's appearing. Still Antonia reſolved to ſit up till her aunt's arrival; and, in ſpite of all her remonſtrances, Dame Jacintha and Flora inſiſted upon doing the ſame. The hours paſſed on ſlow and tediouſly. Lorenzo's departure from Madrid had put a ſtop to the nightly ſerenades: ſhe hoped in vain to hear the uſual ſound of guitars beneath her window. She took up her own, and ſtruck a few chords; but muſic that evening had loſt its charms for her, and ſhe ſoon replaced the inſtrument in its caſe. She ſeated herſelf at her embroidery frame, but nothing went right; the ſilks were miſſing, the thread ſnapped every moment, and the needles were ſo expert at falling that they ſeemed to be animated. At length a flake of wax fell from the taper which ſtood near her upon a favourite wreath of violets; this completely diſcompoſed her; ſhe threw down her needle, and quitted the frame. It was decreed that for that night nothing ſhould

have

have the power of amuſing her. She was the prey of ennui, and employed herſelf in making fruitleſs wiſhes for the arrival of her aunt.

As ſhe walked with a liſtleſs air up and down the chamber, the door caught her eye conducting to that which had been her mother's. She remembered that Elvira's little library was arranged there, and thought that ſhe might poſſibly find in it ſome book to amuſe her till Leonella ſhould arrive. Accordingly ſhe took her taper from the table, paſſed through the little cloſet, and entered the adjoining apartment. As ſhe looked around her, the ſight of this room brought to her recollection a thouſand painful ideas. It was the firſt time of her entering it ſince her mother's death. The total ſilence prevailing through the chamber, the bed deſpoiled of its furniture, the cheerleſs hearth where ſtood an extinguiſhed lamp, and a few dying plants in the window, which ſince Elvira's loſs had been neglected, inſpired

Antonia

Antonia with a melancholy awe. The gloom of night gave ſtrength to this ſenſation. She placed her light upon the table, and ſunk into a large chair, in which ſhe had ſeen her mother ſeated a thouſand and a thouſand times. She was never to ſee her ſeated there again! Tears unbidden ſtreamed down her cheek, and ſhe abandoned herſelf to the ſadneſs which grew deeper with every moment.

Aſhamed of her weakneſs, ſhe at length roſe from her ſeat; ſhe proceeded to ſeek for what had brought her to this melancholy ſcene. The ſmall collection of books was arranged upon ſeveral ſhelves in order. Antonia examined them without finding any thing likely to intereſt her, till ſhe put her hand upon a volume of old Spaniſh ballads. She read a few ſtanzas of one of them. They excited her curioſity. She took down the book, and ſeated herſelf to peruſe it with eaſe. She trimmed the taper, which now drew towards its end, and then read the following ballad:

ALONZO

ALONZO THE BRAVE AND FAIR IMOGINE.

A warrior ſo bold and a virgin ſo bright
Converſed, as they ſat on the green;
They gazed on each other with tender delight:
Alonzo the Brave was the name of the knight,
The maid's was the Fair Imogine.

"And, oh!" ſaid the youth, "ſince to-morrow I go
To fight in a far diſtant land,
Your tears for my abſence ſoon leaving to flow,
Some other will court you, and you will beſtow
On a wealthier ſuitor your hand."

"Oh! hush theſe ſuſpicions," Fair Imogine ſaid,
"Offenſive to love and to me!
For, if you be living, or if you be dead,
I ſwear by the Virgin, that none in your ſtead
Shall huſband of Imogine be.

"If e'er I, by luſt or by wealth led aſide,
Forget my Alonzo the Brave,
God grant, that to puniſh my falſehood and pride,
Your ghoſt at the marriage may ſit by my ſide,
May tax me with perjury, claim me as bride,
And bear me away to the grave!"

To Paleſtine haſtened the hero ſo bold;
His love, ſhe lamented him ſore:
But ſcarce had a twelvemonth elapſed, when behold,
A Baron all covered with jewels and gold
Arrived at Fair Imogine's door.

His

His treasure, his presents, his spacious domain
Soon made her untrue to her vows:
He dazzled her eyes; he bewildered her brain;
He caught her affections so light and so vain,
And carried her home as his spouse.

And now had the marriage been blest by the priest;
The revelry now was begun:
The tables they groaned with the weight of the feast;
Nor yet had the laughter and merriment ceased,
When the bell of the castle told—"one!"

Then first with amazement Fair Imogine found
That a stranger was placed by her side:
His air was terrific; he uttered no sound;
He spoke not, he moved not, he looked not around,
But earnestly gazed on the bride.

His vizor was closed, and gigantic his height;
His armour was sable to view:
All pleasure and laughter were hushed at his sight;
The dogs as they eyed him drew back in affright;
The lights in the chamber burned blue!

His presence all bosoms appeared to dismay;
The guests sat in silence and fear.
At length spoke the bride, while she trembled: "I pray,
Sir Knight, that your helmet aside you would lay,
And deign to partake of our cheer."

The lady is ſilent: the ſtranger complies,
His vizor he ſlowly uncloſed:
Oh! God! what a ſight met Fair Imogine's eyes!
What words can expreſs her diſmay and ſurpriſe,
When a ſkeleton's head was expoſed!

All preſent then uttered a terrified ſhout;
All turned with diſguſt from the ſcene.
The worms they crept in, and the worms they crept out,
And ſported his eyes and his temples about,
While the ſpectre addreſſed Imogine:

"Behold me, thou falſe one! behold me!" he cried;
"Remember Alonzo the Brave!
God grants, that to puniſh thy falſehood and pride
My ghoſt at thy marriage ſhould ſit by thy ſide,
Should tax thee with perjury, claim thee as bride,
And bear thee away to the grave!"

Thus ſaying, his arms round the lady he wound,
While loudly ſhe ſhrieked in diſmay;
Then ſank with his prey through the wide-yawning ground:
Nor ever again was Fair Imogine found,
Or the ſpectre who bore her away.

Not long lived the Baron; and none ſince that time
To inhabit the caſtle preſume;
For chronicles tell that, by order ſublime,
There Imogine ſuffers the pain of her crime,
And mourns her deplorable doom.

At midnight four times in each year does her ſpright,
When mortals in ſlumber are bound,
Arrayed in her bridal apparel of white,
Appear in the hall with the Skeleton-Knight,
And ſhriek as he whirls her around.

While they drink out of ſkulls newly torn from the grave,
Dancing round them the ſpectres are ſeen:
Their liquor is blood, and this horrible ſtave
They howl:—"To the health of Alonzo the Brave,
And his conſort, the Fair Imogine!"

The peruſal of this ſtory was ill calculated to diſpel Antonia's melancholy. She had naturally a ſtrong inclination to the marvellous; and her nurſe, who believed firmly in apparitions, had related to her, when an infant, ſo many horrible adventures of this kind, that all Elvira's attempts had failed to eradicate their impreſſions from her daughter's mind. Antonia ſtill nouriſhed a ſuperſtitious prejudice in her boſom: ſhe was often ſuſceptible of terrors, which, when ſhe diſcovered their natural inſignificant cauſe, made her bluſh at

her

her own weakneſs. With ſuch a turn of mind, the adventure which ſhe had juſt been reading ſufficed to give her apprehenſions the alarm. The hour and the ſcene combined to authoriſe them. It was the dead of night; ſhe was alone, and in the chamber once occupied by her deceaſed mother. The weather was comfortleſs and ſtormy; the wind howled around the houſe, the doors rattled in their frames, and the heavy rain pattered againſt the windows. No other ſound was heard. The taper, now burnt down to the ſocket, ſometimes flaring upwards, ſhot a gleam of light through the room, then ſinking again ſeemed upon the point of expiring. Antonia's heart throbbed with agitation; her eyes wandered fearfully over the objects around her, as the trembling flame illuminated them at intervals. She attempted to riſe from her ſeat, but her limbs trembled ſo violently that ſhe was unable to proceed. She then called Flora, who was in a room at no great diſtance; but agitation choked her

her voice, and her cries died away in hollow murmurs.

She paſſed ſome minutes in this ſituation, after which her terrors began to diminiſh. She ſtrove to recover herſelf, and acquire ſtrength enough to quit the room. Suddenly ſhe fancied that ſhe heard a low ſigh drawn near her. This idea brought back her former weakneſs. She had already raiſed herſelf from her ſeat, and was on the point of taking the lamp from the table. The imaginary noiſe ſtopped her; ſhe drew back her hand, and ſupported herſelf upon the back of a chair. She liſtened anxiouſly, but nothing more was heard.

"Gracious God!" ſhe ſaid to herſelf, "what could be that ſound? Was I deceived, or did I really hear it?"

Her reflections were interrupted by a voice at the door ſcarcely audible; it ſeemed as if ſomebody was whiſpering. Antonia's alarm increaſed; yet the bolt ſhe knew to be faſtened, and this idea in ſome degree re-aſſured her. Preſently the latch was

lifted

lifted up ſoftly, and the door moved with caution backwards and forwards. Exceſs of terror now ſupplied Antonia with that ſtrength, of which ſhe had till then been deprived. She ſtarted from her place, and made towards the cloſet door, whence ſhe might ſoon have reached the chamber where ſhe expected to find Flora and Dame Jacintha. Scarcely had ſhe reached the middle of the room, when the latch was lifted up a ſecond time. An involuntary movement obliged her to turn her head. Slowly and gradually the door turned upon its hinges, and ſtanding upon the threſhold ſhe beheld a tall thin figure, wrapped in a white ſhroud which covered it from head to foot.

This viſion arreſted her feet; ſhe remained as if petrified in the middle of the apartment. The ſtranger with meaſured and ſolemn ſteps drew near the table. The dying taper darted a blue and melancholy flame as the figure advanced towards it. Over the table was fixed a ſmall clock; the

hand

hand of it was upon the ſtroke of three. The figure ſtopped oppoſite to the clock; it raiſed its right arm, and pointed to the hour, at the ſame time looking earneſtly upon Antonia, who waited for the concluſion of this ſcene, motionleſs and ſilent.

The figure remained in this poſture for ſome moments. The clock ſtruck. When the ſound had ceaſed, the ſtranger advanced yet a few ſteps nearer Antonia.

"Yet three days," ſaid a voice faint, hollow, and ſepulchral; "yet three days, and we meet again!"

Antonia ſhuddered at the words.

"We meet again?" ſhe pronounced at length with difficulty: "Where ſhall we meet? Whom ſhall I meet?"

The figure pointed to the ground with one hand, and with the other raiſed the linen which covered its face.

"Almighty God! My mother?"

Antonia ſhrieked, and fell lifeleſs upon the floor.

Dame Jacintha, who was at work in a neigh-

neighbouring chamber, was alarmed by the cry: Flora was juſt gone down ſtairs to fetch freſh oil for the lamp by which they had been ſitting. Jacintha therefore haſtened alone to Antonia's aſſiſtance, and great was her amazement to find her extended upon the floor. She raiſed her in her arms, conveyed her to her apartment, and placed her upon the bed, ſtill ſenſeleſs. She then proceeded to bathe her temples, chafe her hands, and uſe all poſſible means of bringing her to herſelf. With ſome difficulty ſhe ſucceeded. Antonia opened her eyes, and looked round her wildly.

"Where is ſhe?" ſhe cried in a trembling voice: "Is ſhe gone? Am I ſafe? Speak to me! Comfort me! Oh! ſpeak to me, for God's ſake!"

"Safe from whom, my child?" replied the aſtoniſhed Jacintha: "What alarms you? Of whom are you afraid?"

"In three days! She told me that we ſhould meet in three days! I heard her ſay it!

"I saw her, Jacintha, I saw her but this moment!"

She threw herself upon Jacintha's bosom.

"You saw her?—Saw whom?"

"My mother's ghost!"

"Christ Jesus!" cried Jacintha; and, starting from the bed, let fall Antonia upon the pillow, and fled in consternation out of the room.

As she hastened down stairs, she met Flora ascending them.

"Go to your mistress, Flora," said she; "here are rare doings! Oh! I am the most unfortunate woman alive! My house is filled with ghosts and dead bodies, and the Lord knows what besides; yet I am sure nobody likes such company less than I do. But go your way to Donna Antonia, Flora, and let me go mine."

Thus saying, she continued her course to the street-door, which she opened; and, without allowing herself time to throw on

her

her veil, ſhe made the beſt of her way to the Capuchin-abbey. In the mean while, Flora haſtened to her lady's chamber, equally ſurpriſed and alarmed at Jacintha's conſternation. She found Antonia lying upon the bed, inſenſible. She uſed the ſame means for her recovery that Jacintha had already employed; but finding that her miſtreſs only recovered from one fit to fall into another, ſhe ſent in all haſte for a phyſician. While expecting his arrival, ſhe undreſſed Antonia, and conveyed her to bed.

Heedleſs of the ſtorm, terrified almoſt out of her ſenſes, Jacintha ran through the ſtreets, and ſtopped not till ſhe reached the gate of the abbey. She rang loudly at the bell; and as ſoon as the porter appeared, ſhe deſired permiſſion to ſpeak to the ſuperior. Ambroſio was then conferring with Matilda upon the means of procuring acceſs to Antonia. The cauſe of Elvira's death remaining unknown, he was convinced that crimes were not ſo ſwiftly fol-

lowed by punishment as his instructors the monks had taught him, and as till then he had himself believed. This persuasion made him resolve upon Antonia's ruin, for the enjoyment of whose person dangers and difficulties only seemed to have increased his passion. The monk had already made one attempt to gain admission to her presence; but Flora had refused him in such a manner as to convince him that all future endeavours must be vain. Elvira had confided her suspicions to that trusty servant: she had desired her never to leave Ambrosio alone with her daughter, and, if possible, to prevent their meeting altogether. Flora promised to obey her, and had executed her orders to the very letter. Ambrosio's visit had been rejected that morning, though Antonia was ignorant of it. He saw that to obtain a sight of his mistress by open means was out of the question; and both himself and Matilda had consumed the night in endeavouring to invent some plan, whose event might be more successful.

ſucceſsful. Such was their employment when a lay-brother entered the abbot's cell, and informed him that a woman calling herſelf Jacintha Zuniga requeſted audience for a few minutes.

Ambroſio was by no means diſpoſed to grant the petition of his viſitor. He refuſed it poſitively, and bade the lay-brother tell the ſtranger to return the next day. Matilda interrupted him——

"See this woman," ſaid ſhe in a low voice; "I have my reaſons."

The abbot obeyed her, and ſignified that he would go to the parlour immediately. With this anſwer the lay-brother withdrew. As ſoon as they were alone, Ambroſio enquired why Matilda wiſhed him to ſee this Jacintha.

"She is Antonia's hoſteſs," replied Matilda; "ſhe may poſſibly be of uſe to you; but let us examine her, and learn what brings her hither."

They proceeded together to the parlour, where Jacintha was already waiting for the

abbot. She had conceived a great opinion of his piety and virtue; and, ſuppoſing him to have much influence over the devil, thought that it muſt be an eaſy matter for him to lay Elvira's ghoſt in the red ſea. Filled with this perſuaſion, ſhe had haſtened to the abbey. As ſoon as ſhe ſaw the monk enter the parlour, ſhe dropped upon her knees, and began her ſtory as follows:

"Oh! reverend father! ſuch an accident! ſuch an adventure! I know not what courſe to take; and unleſs you can help me, I ſhall certainly go diſtracted. Well, to be ſure, never was woman ſo unfortunate as myſelf! All in my power to keep clear of ſuch abomination have I done, and yet that all is too little. What ſignifies my telling my beads four times a day, and obſerving every faſt preſcribed by the calendar? What ſignifies my having made three pilgrimages to St. James of Compoſtella, and purchaſed as many pardons from the pope as would buy off Cain's puniſhment? Nothing proſpers with me! All goes wrong,

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and God only knows whether any thing will ever go right again! Why now, be your holineſs the judge—My lodger dies in convulſions; out of pure kindneſs I bury her at my own expence; [not that ſhe is any relation of mine, or that I ſhall be benefited a ſingle piſtole by her death: I got nothing by it, and therefore you know, reverend father, that her living or dying was juſt the ſame to me. But that is nothing to the purpoſe; to return to what I was ſaying], I took care of her funeral, had every thing performed decently and properly, and put myſelf to expence enough, God knows! And how do you think the lady repays me for my kindneſs? Why truly by refuſing to ſleep quietly in her comfortable deal coffin, as a peaceable well-diſpoſed ſpirit ought to do, and coming to plague me, who never wiſh to ſet eyes on her again. Forſooth it well becomes her to go racketing about my houſe at midnight, popping into her daughter's room through the key-hole, and frighten-

ing the poor child out of her wits! Though she be a ghost, she might be more civil than to bolt into a person's house who likes her company so little. But as for me, reverend father, the plain state of the case is this: if she walks into my house, I must walk out of it, for I cannot abide such visitors—not I. Thus you see, your sanctity, that without your assistance I am ruined and undone for ever. I shall be obliged to quit my house: nobody will take it when 'tis known that she haunts it, and then I shall find myself in a fine situation. Miserable woman that I am! what shall I do? what will become of me?"

Here she wept bitterly, wrung her hands, and begged to know the abbot's opinion of her case.

"In truth, good woman," replied he, "it will be difficult for me to relieve you, without knowing what is the matter with you. You have forgotten to tell me what has happened, and what it is you want."

"Let me die," cried Jacintha, "but your

our ſanctity is in the right. This then s the fact ſtated briefly—A lodger of nine is lately dead; a very good ſort of roman, that I muſt needs ſay for her; as ar as my knowledge of her went, though hat was not a great way. She kept me too nuch at a diſtance; for indeed ſhe was iven to be upon the high ropes; and when- ver I ventured to ſpeak to her, ſhe had a ook with her which always made me feel a ittle queeriſh: God forgive me for ſaying); However, though ſhe was more ſtately han needful, and affected to look down pon me (though, if I am well informed, I ome of as good parents as ſhe could do or her ears, for her father was a ſhoe-maker t Cordova, and mine was an hatter at Madrid—aye, and a very creditable hatter oo, let me tell you), yet for all her pride he was a quiet well-behaved body, and I ever wiſh to have a better lodger. This nakes me wonder the more at her not ſleep- ng quietly in her grave; but there is no uſting to people in this world. For my

part, I never ſaw her do amiſs, except on the Friday before her death. To be ſure, I was then much ſcandalized by ſeeing her eat the wing of a chicken. 'How, Madona Flora!' quoth I (Flora, may it pleaſe your reverence, is the name of the waiting maid) —'how, Madona Flora!' quoth I, 'does your miſtreſs eat fleſh upon Fridays? Well! well! ſee the event, and then remember that Dame Jacintha warned you of it!' Theſe were my very words; but, alas! I might as well have held my tongue. Nobody minded me: and Flora, who is ſomewhat pert and ſnappiſh (more is the pity, ſay I), told me, that there was no more harm in eating a chicken than the egg from which it came: nay ſhe even declared, that if her lady added a ſlice of bacon, ſhe would not be an inch nearer damnation. God protect us! a poor ignorant ſinful ſoul! I proteſt to your holineſs, I trembled to hear her utter ſuch blaſphemies, and expected every moment to ſee the ground open and ſwallow her up, chicken and all; for you muſt know, worſhipful

ſhipful father, that while ſhe talked thus, ſhe held the plate in her hand on which lay the identical roaſt fowl: and a fine bird it was, that I muſt ſay for it—done to a turn, for I ſuperintended the cooking of it myſelf. It was a little gallician of my own raiſing, may it pleaſe your holineſs, and the fleſh was as white as an egg-ſhell, as indeed Donna Elvira told me herſelf. "Dame Jacintha," ſaid ſhe very good-humouredly, though to ſay the truth ſhe was always very polite to me——"

Here Ambroſio's patience failed him. Eager to know Jacintha's buſineſs in which Antonia ſeemed to be concerned, he was almoſt diſtracted while liſtening to the rambling of this proſing old woman. He interrupted her, and proteſted that if ſhe did not immediately tell her ſtory and have done with it, he ſhould quit the parlour, and leave her to get out of her difficulties by herſelf. This threat had the deſired effect. Jacintha related her buſineſs in as few words as ſhe could manage: but her

account was ſtill ſo prolix, that Ambroſio had need of his patience to bear him to the concluſion.

"And ſo, your reverence," ſaid ſhe, after relating Elvira's death and burial, with all their circumſtances——" and ſo, your reverence, upon hearing the ſhriek, I put away my work, and away poſted I to Donna Antonia's chamber. Finding nobody there, I paſſed on to the next: but I muſt own I was a little timorous at going in; for this was the very room where Donna Elvira uſed to ſleep. However in I went, and ſure enough there lay the young lady at full length upon the floor, as cold as a ſtone, and as white as a ſheet. I was ſurpriſed at this, as your holineſs may well ſuppoſe: but, oh me! how I ſhook when I ſaw a great tall figure at my elbow, whoſe head touched the ceiling! The face was Donna Elvira's, I muſt confeſs; but out of its mouth came clouds of fire; its arms were loaded with heavy chains, which it rattled piteouſly; and every hair on its head was a ſerpent as big

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as my arm. At this I was frightened enough, and began to say my ave-maria: but the ghost interrupting me uttered three loud groans, and roared out in a terrible voice, 'Oh! that chicken's wing! my poor soul suffers for it.' As soon as she had said this, the ground opened, the spectre sank down; I heard a clap of thunder, and the room was filled with a smell of brimstone. When I recovered from my fright, and had brought Donna Antonia to herself, who told me that she had cried out upon seeing her mother's ghost (and well might she cry, poor soul! had I been in her place, I should have cried ten times louder), it directly came into my head, that if any one had power to quiet this spectre, it must be your reverence. So hither I came in all diligence, to beg that you will sprinkle my house with holy water, and lay the apparition in the Red Sea."

Ambrosio stared at this strange story, which he could not credit.

"Did Donna Antonia also see the ghost?" said he.

"As plain as I ſee you, reverend father."

Ambroſio pauſed for a moment. Here was an opportunity offered him of gaining acceſs to Antonia, but he heſitated to employ it. The reputation which he enjoyed in Madrid was ſtill dear to him; and ſince he had loſt the reality of virtue, it appeared as if its ſemblance was become more valuable. He was conſcious that publicly to break through the rule never to quit the abbey-precincts would derogate much from his ſuppoſed auſterity. In viſiting Elvira, he had always taken care to keep his features concealed from the domeſtics. Except by the lady, her daughter, and the faithful Flora, he was known in the family by no other name than that of father Jerome. Should he comply with Jacintha's requeſt, and accompany her to her houſe, he knew that the violation of his rule could not be kept a ſecret. However, his eagerneſs to ſee Antonia obtained the victory. He even hoped that the ſingularity of this adven-

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ture would justify him in the eyes of Madrid. But whatever might be the consequences, he resolved to profit by the opportunity which chance had presented to him. An expressive look from Matilda confirmed him in this resolution.

"Good woman," said he to Jacintha, "what you tell me is so extraordinary that I can scarcely credit your assertions. However, I will comply with your request. To-morrow, after matins, you may expect me at your house: I will then examine into what I can do for you; and, if it is in my power, will free you from this unwelcome visitor. Now then go home, and peace be with you!"

"Home!" exclaimed Jacintha; "I go home? Not I, by my troth!—except under your protection, I set no foot of mine within the threshold. God help me! the ghost may meet me upon the stairs, and whisk me away with her to the devil! Oh! that I had accepted young Melchior Basco's offer! then I should have had somebody to pro-

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teſt me; but now I am a lone woman, and meet with nothing but croſſes and misfortunes. Thank Heaven it is not yet too late to repent. There is Simon Gonzalez will have me any day of the week; and if I live till day-break, I will marry him out of hand: an huſband I will have, that is determined; for, now this ghoſt is once in my houſe, I ſhall be frightened out of my wits to ſleep alone. But, for God's ſake, reverend father! come with me now. I ſhall have no reſt till the houſe is purified, or the poor young lady either. The dear girl! ſhe is in a piteous taking: I left her in ſtrong convulſions, and I doubt ſhe will not eaſily recover her fright."

The friar ſtarted, and interrupted her haſtily.

"In convulſions, ſay you? Antonia in convulſions? Lead on, good woman, I follow you this moment."

Jacintha inſiſted upon his ſtopping to furniſh himſelf with the veſſel of holy water. With this requeſt he complied. Think-

ing herſelf ſafe under his protection ſhould a legion of ghoſts attack her, the old woman returned the monk a profuſion of thanks, and they departed together for the ſtrada di San Iago.

So ſtrong an impreſſion had the ſpectre made upon Antonia, that for the firſt two or three hours the phyſician declared her life to be in danger. The fits at length becoming leſs frequent, induced him to alter his opinion. He ſaid that to keep her quiet was all that was neceſſary; and he ordered a medicine to be prepared, which would tranquillize her nerves, and procure her that repoſe which at preſent ſhe much wanted. The ſight of Ambroſio, who now appeared with Jacintha at her bed-ſide, contributed eſſentially to compoſe her ruffled ſpirits. Elvira had not ſufficiently explained herſelf upon the nature of his deſigns, to make a girl ſo ignorant of the world as her daughter aware how dangerous was his acquaintance. At this moment, when penetrated with horror at the ſcene which

had

had juſt paſſed, and dreading to contemplate the ghoſt's prediction, her mind had need of all the ſuccours of friendſhip and religion, Antonia regarded the abbot with an eye doubly partial. That ſtrong prepoſſeſſion in his favour ſtill exiſted, which ſhe had felt for him at firſt ſight: ſhe fancied, yet knew not wherefore, that his preſence was a ſafeguard to her from every danger, inſult, or misfortune. She thanked him gratefully for his viſit, and related to him the adventure which had alarmed her ſo ſeriouſly.

The abbot ſtrove to re-aſſure her and convince her that the whole had been a deception of her over-heated fancy. The ſolitude in which ſhe had paſſed the evening, the gloom of night, the book which ſhe had been reading, and the room in which ſhe ſat, were all calculated to place before her ſuch a viſion. He treated the idea of ghoſts with ridicule, and produced ſtrong arguments to prove the fallacy of ſuch a ſyſtem. His converſation tranquillized and comforted her, but did not convince her.

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She could not believe that the ſpectre had been a mere creature of her imagination: every circumſtance was impreſſed upon her mind too forcibly to permit her flattering herſelf with ſuch an idea. She perſiſted in aſſerting that ſhe had really ſeen her mother's ghoſt, had heard the period of her diſſolution announced, and declared that ſhe never ſhould quit her bed alive. Ambroſio adviſed her againſt encouraging theſe ſentiments, and then quitted her chamber, having promiſed to repeat his viſit on the morrow. Antonia received this aſſurance with every mark of joy: but the monk eaſily perceived that he was not equally acceptable to her attendant. Flora obeyed Elvira's injunctions with the moſt ſcrupulous obſervance. She examined with an anxious eye every circumſtance likely in the leaſt to prejudice her young miſtreſs, to whom ſhe had been attached for many years. She was a native of Cuba, had followed Elvira to Spain, and loved the young Antonia

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with a mother's affection. Flora quitted not the room for a moment while the abbot remained there: ſhe watched his every word, his every look, his every action. He ſaw that her ſuſpicious eye was always fixed upon him; and, conſcious that his deſigns would not bear inſpection ſo minute, he felt frequently confuſed and diſconcerted. He was aware that ſhe doubted the purity of his intentions; that ſhe would never leave him alone with Antonia; and, his miſtreſs defended by the preſence of this vigilant obſerver, he deſpaired of finding the means to gratify his paſſion.

As he quitted the houſe, Jacintha met him, and begged that ſome maſſes might be ſung for the repoſe of Elvira's ſoul, which ſhe doubted not was ſuffering in purgatory.

He promiſed not to forget her requeſt; but he perfectly gained the old woman's heart, by engaging to watch during the whole of the approaching night in the haunted chamber. Jacintha could find no

terms

terms ſufficiently ſtrong to expreſs her gratitude, and the monk departed loaded with her benedictions.

It was broad day when he returned to the abbey. His firſt care was to communicate what had paſſed to his confidante. He felt too ſincere a paſſion for Antonia, to have heard unmoved the prediction of her ſpeedy death, and he ſhuddered at the idea of loſing an object ſo dear to him. Upon this head Matilda re-aſſured him. She confirmed the arguments which himſelf had already uſed: ſhe declared Antonia to have been deceived by the wandering of her brain, by the ſpleen which oppreſſed her at the moment, and by the natural turn of her mind to ſuperſtition and the marvellous. As to Jacintha's account, the abſurdity refuted itſelf. The abbot heſitated not to believe that ſhe had fabricated the whole ſtory, either confuſed by terror, or hoping to make him comply more readily with her requeſt. Having over-ruled the monk's apprehenſions, Matilda continued thus:

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"The prediction and the ghoſt are equally falſe: but it muſt be your care, Ambroſio, to verify the firſt. Antonia within three days muſt indeed be dead to the world: but ſhe muſt live for you. Her preſent illneſs, and this fancy which ſhe has taken into her head, will colour a plan which I have long meditated, but which was impracticable without your procuring acceſs to Antonia. She ſhall be your's, not for a ſingle night, but for ever. All the vigilance of her duenna ſhall not avail her. You ſhall riot unreſtrained in the charms of your miſtreſs. This very day muſt the ſcheme be put in execution, for you have no time to loſe. The nephew of the duke of Medina Celi prepares to demand Antonia for his bride: in a few days ſhe will be removed to the palace of her relation, the marquis de las Ciſternas, and there ſhe will be ſecure from your attempts. Thus during your abſence have I been informed by myſpies, who are ever employed in bringing me intelligence for your ſervice. Now then liſten

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to me. There is a juice extracted from certain herbs known but to few, which brings on the perſon who drinks it the exact image of death. Let this be adminiſtered to Antonia: you may eaſily find means to pour a few drops into her medicine. The effect will be throwing her into ſtrong convulſions for an hour: after which her blood will gradually ceaſe to flow, and heart to beat: a mortal paleneſs will ſpread itſelf over her features, and ſhe will appear a corſe to every eye. She has no friends about her: you may charge yourſelf unſuſpected with the ſuperintendence of her funeral, and cauſe her to be buried in the vaults of St. Clare. Their ſolitude and eaſy acceſs render theſe caverns favourable to your deſigns. Give Antonia the ſoporific draught this evening: eight-and-forty hours after ſhe has drank it, life will revive in her boſom. She will then be abſolutely in your power: ſhe will find all reſiſtance unavailing, and neceſſity will compel her to receive you in her arms."

"Antonia

"Antonia will be in my power!" exclaimed the monk; "Matilda, you transport me! At length then happineſs will be mine, and that happineſs will be Matilda's gift, will be the gift of friendſhip! I ſhall claſp Antonia in my arms, far from every prying eye, from every tormenting intruder! I ſhall ſigh out my ſoul upon her boſom; ſhall teach her young heart the firſt rudiments of pleaſure, and revel uncontrouled in the endleſs variety of her charms! And ſhall this delight indeed be mine? Shall I give the reins to my deſires, and gratify every wild tumultuous wiſh? Oh! Matilda, how can I expreſs to you my gratitude?"

"By profiting by my counſels. Ambroſio, I live but to ſerve you; your intereſt and happineſs are equally mine. Be your perſon Antonia's, but to your friendſhip and your heart I ſtill aſſert my claim. Contributing to yours, forms now my only pleaſure. Should my exertions procure the gratification of your wiſhes, I ſhall conſider

ſider my trouble to be amply repaid. But let us loſe no time. The liquor of which I ſpoke, is only to be found in St. Clare's laboratory. Haſten then to the prioreſs, requeſt of her admiſſion to the laboratory, and it will not be denied. There is a cloſet at the lower end of the great room, filled with liquids of different colours and qualities; the bottle in queſtion ſtands by itſelf, upon the third ſhelf on the left. It contains a greeniſh liquor: fill a ſmall phial with it when you are unobſerved, and Antonia is your own."

The monk hesitated not to adopt this infamous plan. His deſires, but too violent before, had acquired freſh vigour from the ſight of Antonia. As he ſat by her bedſide, accident had again betrayed to him ſome of thoſe charms on which his eyes had dwelt with ſuch delight on the night of Elvira's murder. Sometimes her white and poliſhed arm was diſplayed in arranging the pillow: ſometimes a ſudden move-

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ment diſcovered part of her ſwelling boſom: but wherever the new-found charm preſented itſelf, there reſted the friar's gloating eyes. Scarcely could he maſter himſelf ſufficiently to conceal his deſires from Antonia and her vigilant duenna. Inflamed by the remembrance of theſe beauties, he entered into Matilda's ſcheme without heſitation.

No ſooner were matins over, than he bent his courſe towards the convent of St. Clare; his arrival threw the whole ſiſterhood into the utmoſt amazement. The prioreſs was ſenſible of the honour done her convent by his paying it his firſt viſit, and ſtrove to expreſs her gratitude by every poſſible attention. He was paraded through the garden, ſhewn all the reliques of ſaints and martyrs, and treated with as much reſpect and diſtinction as had he been the Pope himſelf. On his part, Ambroſio received the domina's civilities very graciouſly, and ſtrove to remove her ſurpriſe at his having broken through his reſolution. He ſtated

that

that among his penitents, illneſs prevented many from quitting their houſes. Theſe were exactly the people who moſt needed his advice and the comforts of religion. Many repreſentations had been made to him upon this account, and, though highly repugnant to his own wiſhes, he had found it abſolutely neceſſary, for the ſervice of Heaven, to change his determination, and quit his beloved retirement. The prioreſs applauded his zeal in his profeſſion, and his charity towards mankind. She declared that Madrid was happy in poſſeſſing a man ſo perfect and irreproachable. In ſuch diſcourſe the friar at length reached the laboratory: he found the cloſet; the bottle ſtood in the place which Matilda had deſcribed, and the monk ſeized an opportunity to fill his phial unobſerved with the ſoporific liquor. Then, having partaken of a collation in the refectory, he retired from the convent, pleaſed with the ſucceſs of his viſit, and leaving the nuns delighted by the honour conferred upon them.

He waited till evening before he took the road to Antonia's dwelling. Jacintha welcomed him with tranſport, and beſought him not to forget his promiſe to paſs the night in the haunted chamber. That promiſe he now repeated. He found Antonia tolerably well, but ſtill harping upon the ghoſt's prediction. Flora moved not from her lady's bed, and, by ſymptoms yet ſtronger than on the former night, teſtified her diſlike to the abbot's preſence. Still Ambroſio affected not to obſerve them. The phyſician arrived while he was converſing with Antonia. It was dark already; lights were called for, and Flora was compelled to deſcend for them herſelf. However, as ſhe left a third perſon in the room, and expected to be abſent but a few minutes, ſhe believed that ſhe riſqued nothing in quitting her poſt. No ſooner had ſhe left the room, than Ambroſio moved towards the table, on which ſtood Antonia's medicine. It was placed in a receſs of the window. The phyſician, ſeated in an arm-chair, and

employed

employed in queſtioning his patient, paid no attention to the proceedings of the monk. Ambroſio ſeized the opportunity; he drew out the fatal phial, and let a few drops fall into the medicine: he then haſtily left the table, and returned to the ſeat which he had quitted. When Flora made her appearance with lights, every thing ſeemed to be exactly as ſhe had left it.

The phyſician declared that Antonia might quit her chamber the next day with perfect ſafety. He recommended her following the ſame preſcription which on the night before had procured her a refreſhing ſleep. Flora replied, that the draught ſtood ready upon the table: he adviſed the patient to take it without delay, and then retired. Flora poured the medicine into a cup, and preſented it to her miſtreſs. At that moment Ambroſio's courage failed him. Might not Matilda have deceived him? Might not jealouſy have perſuaded her to deſtroy her rival, and ſubſtitute poiſon in the room of an opiate? This idea

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appeared ſo reaſonable, that he was on the point of preventing her from ſwallowing the medicine. His reſolution was adopted too late. The cup was already emptied, and Antonia reſtored it into Flora's hands. No remedy was now to be found; Ambroſio could only expect the moment impatiently deſtined to decide upon Antonia's life or death, upon his own happineſs or deſpair.

Dreading to create ſuſpicion by his ſtay, or betray himſelf by his mind's agitation, he took leave of his victim, and withdrew from the room. Antonia parted from him with leſs cordiality than on the former night. Flora had repreſented to her miſtreſs, that to admit his viſits was to diſobey her mother's orders. She deſcribed to her his emotion on entering the room, and the fire which ſparkled in his eyes while he gazed upon her. This had eſcaped Antonia's obſervation, but not her attendant's, who, explaining the monk's deſigns, and their probable conſequences, in terms much

clearer

clearer than Elvira's, though not quite ſo delicate, had ſucceeded in alarming her young lady, and perſuading her to treat him more diſtantly than ſhe had done hitherto. The idea of obeying her mother's will at once determined Antonia. Though ſhe grieved at loſing his ſociety, ſhe conquered herſelf ſufficiently to receive the monk with ſome degree of reſerve and coldneſs. She thanked him with reſpect and gratitude for his former viſits, but did not invite his repeating them in future. It now was not the friar's intereſt to ſolicit admiſſion to her preſence, and he took leave of her as if not deſigning to return. Fully perſuaded that the acquaintance which ſhe dreaded was now at an end, Flora was ſo much worked upon by his eaſy compliance, that ſhe began to doubt the juſtice of her ſuſpicions. As ſhe lighted him down ſtairs, ſhe thanked him for having endeavoured to root out from Antonia's mind her ſuperſtitious terrors of the ſpectre's prediction: ſhe added, that as he ſeemed in-

tereſted in Donna Antonia's welfare, ſhould any change take place in her ſituation, ſhe would be careful to let him know it. The monk, in replying, took pains to raiſe his voice, hoping that Jacintha would hear it. In this he ſucceeded. As he reached the foot of the ſtairs with his conductreſs, the landlady failed not to make her appearance.

"Why, ſurely you are not going away, reverend father?" cried ſhe: "Did you not promiſe to paſs the night in the haunted chamber? Chriſt Jeſus! I ſhall be left alone with the ghoſt, and a fine pickle I ſhall be in by morning! Do all I could, ſay all I could, that obſtinate old brute, Simon Gonzalez, refuſed to marry me to-day; and before to-morrow comes, I ſuppoſe I ſhall be torn to pieces by the ghoſts and goblins, and devils, and what not! For God's ſake, your holineſs, do not leave me in ſuch a woful condition! On my bended knees I beſeech you to keep your promiſe: watch this night in the haunted chamber; lay the

apparition

apparition in the red ſea, and Jacintha remembers you in her prayers to the laſt day of her exiſtence!"

This requeſt Ambroſio expected and deſired; yet he affected to raiſe objections, and to ſeem unwilling to keep his word! He told Jacintha that the ghoſt exiſted no where but in her own brain, and that her inſiſting upon his ſtaying all night in the houſe was ridiculous and uſeleſs. Jacintha was obſtinate; ſhe was not to be convinced, and preſſed him ſo urgently not to leave her a prey to the devil, that at length he granted her requeſt. All this ſhow of reſiſtance impoſed not upon Flora, who was naturally of a ſuſpicious temper. She ſuſpected the monk to be acting a part very contrary to his own inclinations, and that he wiſhed for no better than to remain where he was. She even went ſo far as to believe that Jacintha was in his intereſt; and the poor old woman was immediately ſet down as no better than a procureſs. While ſhe applauded herſelf for having pe-

netrated into this plot againſt her lady's honour, ſhe reſolved in ſecret to render it fruitleſs.

"So then," ſaid ſhe to the abbot with a look half ſatirical and half indignant—"ſo then you mean to ſtay here to-night? Do ſo, in God's name! Nobody will prevent you. Sit up to watch for the ghoſt's arrival: I ſhall ſit up too, and the Lord grant that I may ſee nothing worſe than a ghoſt! I quit not Donna Antonia's bed-ſide during this bleſſed night. Let me ſee any one dare to enter the room, and be he mortal or immortal, be he ghoſt, devil, or man, I warrant his repenting that ever he croſſed the threſhold!"

This hint was ſufficiently ſtrong, and Ambroſio underſtood its meaning. But inſtead of ſhewing that he perceived her ſuſpicions, he replied mildly, that he approved the duenna's precautions, and adviſed her to perſevere in her intention. This ſhe aſſured him faithfully that he might depend upon her doing. Jacintha

then

then conducted him into the chamber where the ghoſt had appeared, and Flora returned to her lady's.

Jacintha opened the door of the haunted room with a trembling hand; ſhe ventured to peep in, but the wealth of India would not have tempted her to croſs the threſhold. She gave the taper to the monk, wiſhed him well through the adventure, and haſtened to be gone. Ambroſio entered. He bolted the door, placed the light upon the table, and ſeated himſelf in the chair which on the former night had ſuſtained Antonia. In ſpite of Matilda's aſſurances, that the ſpectre was a mere creation of fancy, his mind was impreſſed with a certain myſterious horror. He in vain endeavoured to ſhake it off. The ſilence of the night, the ſtory of the apparition, the chamber wainſcoted with dark oak pannels, the recollection which it brought with it of the murdered Elvira, and his incertitude reſpecting the nature of the drops given by him to Antonia, made him feel uneaſy at

his preſent ſituation. But he thought much leſs of the ſpectre than of the poiſon. Should he have deſtroyed the only object which rendered life dear to him; ſhould the ghoſt's prediction prove true; ſhould Antonia in three days be no more, and he the wretched cauſe of her death . . . . . The ſuppoſition was too horrible to dwell upon. He drove away theſe dreadful images, and as often they preſented themſelves again before him. Matilda had aſſured him that the effects of the opiate would be ſpeedy. He liſtened with fear, yet with eagerneſs, expecting to hear ſome diſturbance in the adjoining chamber. All was ſtill ſilent. He concluded that the drops had not begun to operate. Great was the ſtake for which he now played: a moment would ſuffice to decide upon his miſery or happineſs. Matilda had taught him the means of aſcertaining, that life was not extinct for ever: upon this eſſay depended all his hopes. With every inſtant his impatience redoubled; his terrors

grew more lively, his anxiety more awake. Unable to bear this ſtate of incertitude, he endeavoured to divert it by ſubſtituting the thoughts of others to his own. The books, as was before mentioned, were ranged upon ſhelves near the table; this ſtood exactly oppoſite to the bed, which was placed in an alcove near the cloſet-door. Ambroſio took down a volume, and ſeated himſelf by the table; but his attention wandered from the pages before him. Antonia's image, and that of the murdered Elvira, perſiſted to force themſelves before his imagination. Still he continued to read, though his eyes ran over the characters without his mind being conſcious of their import.

Such was his occupation when he fancied that he heard a foot-ſtep. He turned his head, but nobody was to be ſeen. He reſumed his book; but in a few minutes after, the ſame ſound was repeated, and followed by a ruſtling noiſe cloſe behind him. He now ſtarted from his ſeat, and, looking round him, perceived the cloſet-door ſtand-

ing half uncloſed. On his firſt entering the room, he had tried to open it, but found it bolted on the inſide.

"How is this?" ſaid he to himſelf; "How comes this door unfaſtened?"

He advanced towards it, he puſhed it open, and looked into the cloſet: no one was there. While he ſtood irreſolute, he thought that he diſtinguiſhed a groaning in the adjacent chamber: it was Antonia's, and he ſuppoſed that the drops began to take effect. But upon liſtening more attentively, he found the noiſe to be cauſed by Jacintha, who had fallen aſleep by the lady's bed-ſide, and was ſnoring moſt luſtily. Ambroſio drew back, and returned to the other room, muſing upon the ſudden opening of the cloſet-door, for which he ſtrove in vain to account.

He paced the chamber up and down in ſilence. At length he ſtopped, and the bed attracted his attention. The curtain of the receſs was but half drawn. He ſighed involuntarily.

"That

"That bed," ſaid he in a low voice, "that bed was Elvira's! There has ſhe paſſed many a quiet night, for ſhe was good and innocent. How ſound muſt have been her ſleep! and yet now ſhe ſleeps ſounder! Does ſhe indeed ſleep? Oh! God grant that ſhe may! What if ſhe roſe from her grave at this ſad and ſilent hour? What if ſhe broke the bonds of the tomb, and glided angrily before my blaſted eyes? Oh! I never could ſupport the ſight! Again to ſee her form diſtorted by dying agonies, her blood-ſwollen veins, her livid countenance, her eyes burſting from their ſockets with pain!—to hear her ſpeak of future puniſhment, menace me with Heaven's vengeance, tax me with the crimes I have committed, with thoſe I am going to commit . . . . . Great God! what is that?"

As he uttered theſe words, his eyes, which were fixed upon the bed, ſaw the curtain ſhaken gently backwards and forwards. The apparition was recalled to his mind, and he almoſt fancied that he beheld El-

vira's viſionary form reclining upon the bed. A few moments conſideration ſufficed to re-aſſure him.

"It was only the wind," ſaid he, recovering himſelf.

Again he paced the chamber; but an involuntary movement of awe and inquietude conſtantly led his eye towards the alcove. He drew near it with irreſolution. He paused before he aſcended the few ſteps which led to it. He put out his hand thrice to remove the curtain, and as often drew it back.

"Abſurd terrors!" he cried at length, aſhamed of his own weakneſs.

Haſtily he mounted the ſteps, when a figure dreſſed in white ſtarted from the alcove, and, gliding by him, mad with precipitation towards the cloſet. Madneſs and deſpair now ſupplied the monk with that courage, of which he had till then been deſtitute. He flew down the ſteps, purſued the apparition, and attempted to graſp it.

"Ghoſt, or devil, I hold you!" he exclaimed,

exclaimed, and seized the spectre by the arm.

"Oh! Christ Jesus!" cried a shrill voice; "Holy father, how you gripe me! I protest that I meant no harm!"

This address, as well as the arm which he held, convinced the abbot that the supposed ghost was substantial flesh and blood. He drew the intruder towards the table, and, holding up the light, discovered the features of..... Madona Flora!

Incensed at having been betrayed by this trifling cause into fears so ridiculous, he asked her sternly, what business had brought her to that chamber. Flora, ashamed at being found out, and terrified at the severity of Ambrosio's looks, fell upon her knees, and promised to make a full confession.

"I protest, reverend father," said she, "that I am quite grieved at having disturbed you; nothing was further from my intention. I meant to get out of the room as quietly as I got in; and had you been

ignorant

ignorant that I watched you, you know it would have been the ſame thing as if I had not watched you at all. To be ſure I did very wrong in being a ſpy upon you—that I cannot deny. But, Lord! your reverence, how can a poor weak woman reſiſt curioſity? Mine was ſo ſtrong to know what you were doing, that I could not but try to get a little peep without any body knowing any thing about it. So with that I left old Dame Jacintha ſitting by my lady's bed, and I ventured to ſteal into the cloſet. Being unwilling to interrupt you, I contented myſelf at firſt with putting my eye to the key-hole; but as I could ſee nothing by this means, I undrew the bolt, and, while your back was turned to the alcove, I whipt me in ſoftly and ſilently. Here I lay ſnug behind the curtain, till your reverence found me out, and ſeized me ere I had time to regain the cloſet-door. This is the whole truth, I aſſure you, holy father, and I beg your pardon a thouſand times for my impertinence."

During

During this ſpeech the abbot had time to recollect himſelf: he was ſatisfied with reading the penitent ſpy a lecture upon the dangers of curioſity, and the meanneſs of the action in which ſhe had been juſt diſcovered. Flora declared herſelf fully perſuaded that ſhe had done wrong; ſhe promiſed never to be guilty of the ſame fault again, and was retiring very humble and contrite to Antonia's chamber, when the cloſet-door was ſuddenly thrown open, and in rushed Jacintha pale and out of breath.

"Oh! Father! Father!" ſhe cried in a voice almoſt choked with terror, "What ſhall I do! What ſhall I do! Here is a fine piece of work! Nothing but misfortunes! Nothing but dead people, and dying people! Oh! I ſhall go diſtracted! I ſhall go diſtracted!"

"Speak! Speak!" cried Flora and the monk at the ſame time: "What has happened? what is the matter?"

"Oh! I ſhall have another corſe in my houſe! Some witch has certainly caſt a ſpell upon

upon it, upon me, and upon all about me! Poor Donna Antonia! there she lies in just such convulsions as killed her mother! The ghost told her true! I am sure the ghost told her true!"

Flora ran, or rather flew, to her lady's chamber: Ambrosio followed her, his bosom trembling with hope and apprehension. They found Antonia as Jacintha had described, torn by racking convulsions, from which they in vain endeavoured to relieve her. The monk dispatched Jacintha to the abbey in all haste, and commissioned her to bring father Pablos back with her without losing a moment.

"I will go for him," replied Jacintha, "and tell him to come hither; but as to bringing him myself, I shall do no such thing. I am sure that the house is bewitched, and burn me if ever I set foot in it again."

With this resolution she set out for the monastery, and delivered to father Pablos the abbot's orders. She then betook herself to the house of old Simon Gonzalez, whom

she

ſhe reſolved never to quit till ſhe had made him her huſband, and his dwelling her own.

Father Pablos had no ſooner beheld Antonia, than he pronounced her incurable. The convulſions continued for an hour; during that time her agonies were much milder than thoſe which her groans created in the abbot's heart. Her every pang ſeemed a dagger in his boſom, and he curſed himſelf a thouſand times for having adopted ſo barbarous a project. The hour being expired, by degrees the fits became leſs frequent, and Antonia leſs agitated. She felt that her diſſolution was approaching, and that nothing could ſave her.

"Worthy Ambroſio," ſhe ſaid in a feeble voice, while ſhe preſſed his hand to her lips; "I am now at liberty to expreſs how grateful is my heart for your attention and kindneſs. I am upon the bed of death; yet an hour, and I ſhall be no more. I may therefore acknowledge without reſtraint, that to relinquiſh your ſociety was very painful to me: but ſuch was the will of a

parent,

parent, and I dared not diſobey. I die without repugnance: there are few who will lament my leaving them—there are few whom I lament to leave. Among thoſe few, I lament for none more than for yourſelf; but we ſhall meet again, Ambroſio! we ſhall one day meet in heaven: there ſhall our friendſhip be renewed, and my mother ſhall view it with pleaſure!"

She pauſed. The abbot ſhuddered when ſhe mentioned Elvira. Antonia imputed his emotion to pity and concern for her.

"You are grieved for me, father," ſhe continued: "Ah! ſigh not for my loſs. I have no crimes to repent, at leaſt none of which I am conſcious; and I reſtore my ſoul without fear to him from whom I received it. I have but few requeſts to make; yet let me hope that what few I have ſhall be granted. Let a ſolemn maſs be ſaid for my ſoul's repoſe, and another for that of my beloved mother; not that I doubt her reſting in her grave. I am now convinced that my reaſon wandered, and the falſehood

falſehood of the ghoſt's prediction is ſufficient to prove my error. But every one has ſome failing: my mother may have had hers, though I knew them not: I therefore wiſh a maſs to be celebrated for her repoſe, and the expence may be defrayed by the little wealth of which I am poſſeſſed. Whatever may then remain, I bequeath to my aunt Leonella. When I am dead, let the marquis de las Ciſternas know that his brother's unhappy family can no longer importune him. But diſappointment makes me unjuſt: they tell me that he is ill, and perhaps, had it been in his power, he wiſhed to have protected me. Tell him, then, father, only that I am dead, and that if he had any faults to me, I forgave him from my heart. This done, I have nothing more to aſk for than your prayers. Promiſe to remember my requeſts, and I ſhall reſign my life without a pang or ſorrow."

Ambroſio engaged to comply with her deſires, and proceeded to give her abſolution.

lution. Every moment announced the approach of Antonia's fate. Her ſight failed, her heart beat ſluggiſhly, her fingers ſtiffened and grew cold, and at two in the morning ſhe expired without a groan. As ſoon as the breath had forſaken her body, father Pablos retired, ſincerely affected at the melancholy ſcene. On her part, Flora gave way to the moſt unbridled ſorrow. Far different concerns employed Ambroſio; he ſought for the pulſe whoſe throbbing, ſo Matilda had aſſured him, would prove Antonia's death but temporal. He found it—he preſſed it—it palpitated beneath his hand, and his heart was filled with ecſtacy. However, he carefully concealed his ſatisfaction at the ſucceſs of his plan. He aſſumed a melancholy air, and, addreſſing himſelf to Flora, warned her againſt abandoning herſelf to fruitleſs ſorrow. Her tears were too ſincere to permit her liſtening to his counſels, and ſhe continued to weep unceaſingly. The friar withdrew, firſt promiſing to give orders

himſelf

himſelf about the funeral, which, out of conſideration for Jacintha as he pretended, ſhould take place with all expedition. Plunged in grief for the loſs of her beloved miſtreſs, Flora ſcarcely attended to what he ſaid. Ambroſio haſtened to command the burial. He obtained permiſſion from the prioreſs, that the corſe ſhould be depoſited in St. Clare's ſepulchre: and on the Friday morning, every proper and needful ceremony being performed, Antonia's body was committed to the tomb.

On the ſame day Leonella arrived at Madrid, intending to preſent her young huſband to Elvira. Various circumſtances had obliged her to defer her journey from Tueſday to Friday; and ſhe had no opportunity of making this alteration in her plans known to her ſiſter. As her heart was truly affectionate, and as ſhe had ever entertained a ſincere regard for Elvira and her daughter, her ſurpriſe at hearing of their ſudden and melancholy fate was fully equalled by her ſorrow and diſappointment.

Ambroſio

Ambroſio ſent to inform her of Antonia's bequeſt: at her ſolicitation, he promiſed, as ſoon as Elvira's trifling debts were diſcharged, to tranſmit to her the remainder. This being ſettled, no other buſineſs detained Leonella in Madrid, and ſhe returned to Cordova with all diligence.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Oh! could I worſhip aught beneath the ſkies,
That earth hath ſeen, or fancy could deviſe,
Thine altar, ſacred Liberty, ſhould ſtand,
Built by no mercenary vulgar hand,
With fragrant turf, and flowers as wild and fair,
As ever dreſſed a bank, or ſcented ſummer air.

COWPER.

HIS whole attention bent upon bringing to juſtice the aſſaſſins of his ſiſter, Lorenzo little thought how ſeverely his intereſt was ſuffering in another quarter. As was before mentioned, he returned not to Madrid till the evening of that day on which Antonia was buried. Signifying to the Grand Inquiſitor the order of the cardinal-duke (a ceremony not to be neglected when a member of the church was to be arreſted publicly), communicating his deſign to his un-

cle and Don Ramirez, and aſſembling a troop of attendants ſufficient to prevent oppoſition, furniſhed him with full occupation during the few hours preceding midnight. Conſequently he had no opportunity to enquire about his miſtreſs, and was perfectly ignorant both of her death and her mother's.

The marquis was by no means out of danger: his delirium was gone, but had left him ſo much exhauſted, that the phyſicians declined pronouncing upon the conſequences likely to enſue. As for Raymond himſelf, he wiſhed for nothing more earneſtly than to join Agnes in the grave. Exiſtence was hateful to him: he ſaw nothing in the world deſerving his attention; and he hoped to hear that Agnes was revenged and himſelf given over in the ſame moment.

Followed by Raymond's ardent prayers for ſucceſs, Lorenzo was at the gates of St. Clare a full hour before the time appointed by the mother St. Urſula. He was accompanied by his uncle, by Don Ramirez

Ramirez de Mello, and a party of choſen archers. Though in conſiderable numbers, their appearance created no ſurpriſe: a great crowd was already aſſembled before the convent-doors, in order to witneſs the proceſſion. It was naturally ſuppoſed, that Lorenzo and his attendants were conducted thither by the ſame deſign. The duke of Medina being recogniſed, the people drew back, and made way for his party to advance. Lorenzo placed himſelf oppoſite to the great gate, through which the pilgrims were to paſs. Convinced that the prioreſs could not eſcape him, he waited patiently for her appearance, which ſhe was expected to make exactly at midnight.

The nuns were employed in religious duties eſtabliſhed in honour of St. Clare, and to which no prophane was ever admitted. The chapel-windows were illuminated. As they ſtood on the outſide, the auditors heard the full ſwell of the organ, accompanied by a chorus of female voices, riſe upon the ſtillneſs of the night.

This died away, and was ſucceeded by a ſingle ſtrain of harmony: it was the voice of her who was deſtined to ſuſtain in the proceſſion the character of St. Clare. For this office the moſt beautiful virgin of Madrid was always ſelected, and ſhe upon whom the choice fell, eſteemed it as the higheſt of honours. While liſtening to the muſic, whoſe melody diſtance only ſeemed to render ſweeter, the audience was wrapped up in profound attention. Univerſal ſilence prevailed through the crowd, and every heart was filled with reverence for religion —every heart but Lorenzo's. Conſcious that among thoſe who chaunted the praiſes of their God ſo ſweetly there were ſome who cloaked with devotion the fouleſt ſins, their hymns inſpired him with deteſtation at their hypocriſy. He had long obſerved with diſapprobation and contempt the ſuperſtition which governed Madrid's inhabitants. His good ſenſe had pointed out to him the artifices of the monks, and the groſs abſurdity of their miracles, wonders, and ſuppoſi-

titious

titious reliques. He bluſhed to ſee his countrymen the dupes of deceptions ſo ridiculous, and only wiſhed for an opportunity to free them from their monkiſh fetters. That opportunity, ſo long deſired in vain, was at length preſented to him. He reſolved not to let it ſlip, but to ſet before the people, in glaring colours, how enormous were the abuſes but too frequently practiſed in monaſteries, and how unjuſtly public eſteem was beſtowed indiſcriminately upon all who wore a religious habit. He longed for the moment deſtined to unmaſk the hypocrites, and convince his countrymen, that a ſanctified exterior does not always hide a virtuous heart.

The ſervice laſted till midnight was announced by the convent-bell. That ſound being heard, the muſic ceaſed: the voices died away ſoftly, and ſoon after the lights diſappeared from the chapel-windows. Lorenzo's heart beat high, when he found the execution of his plan to be at hand. From the natural ſuperſtition of the people he

had prepared himſelf for ſome reſiſtance: but he truſted that the mother St. Urſula would bring good reaſons to juſtify his proceeding. He had force with him to repel the firſt impulſe of the populace, till his arguments ſhould be heard: his only fear was, leſt the domina, ſuſpecting his deſign, ſhould have ſpirited away the nun on whoſe depoſition every thing depended. Unleſs the mother St. Urſula ſhould be preſent, he could only accuſe the prioreſs upon ſuſpicion; and this reflection gave him ſome little apprehenſion for the ſucceſs of his enterpriſe. The tranquillity which ſeemed to reign through the convent, in ſome degree re-aſſured him: ſtill he expected the moment eagerly, when the preſence of his ally ſhould deprive him of the power of doubting.

The abbey of Capuchins was only ſeparated from the convent by the garden and cemetery. The monks had been invited to aſſiſt at the pilgrimage. They now arrived, marching two by two with lighted

torches

torches in their hands, and chaunting hymns in honour of St. Clare. Father Pablos was at their head, the abbot having excuſed himſelf from attending. The people made way for the holy train, and the friars placed themſelves in ranks on either ſide of the great gates. A few minutes ſufficed to arrange the order of the proceſſion. This being ſettled, the convent-doors were thrown open, and again the female chorus ſounded in full melody. Firſt appeared a band of choriſters. As ſoon as they had paſſed, the monks fell in two by two, and followed with ſteps ſlow and meaſured: next came the novices: they bore no tapers, as did the profeſſed, but moved on with eyes bent downwards, and ſeemed to be occupied by telling their beads. To them ſucceeded a young and lovely girl, who repreſented St. Lucia: ſhe held a golden baſon, in which were two eyes: her own were covered by a velvet bandage, and ſhe was conducted by another nun habited as an angel. She was followed by St. Catherine,

a palm-branch in one hand, a flaming ſword in the other: ſhe was robed in white, and her brow was ornamented with a ſparkling diadem. After her appeared St. Genevieve, ſurrounded by a number of imps, who, putting themſelves into groteſque attitudes, drawing her by the robe, and ſporting round her with antic geſtures, endeavoured to diſtract her attention from the book, on which her eyes were conſtantly fixed. Theſe merry devils greatly entertained the ſpectators, who teſtified their pleaſure by repeated burſts of laughter. The prioreſs had been careful to ſelect a nun whoſe diſpoſition was naturally ſolemn and ſaturnine. She had every reaſon to be ſatisfied with her choice: the drolleries of the imps were entirely thrown away, and St. Genevieve moved on without diſcompoſing a muſcle.

Each of theſe ſaints was ſeparated from the other by a band of choriſters, exalting her praiſe in their hymns, but declaring her to be very much inferior to St. Clare,

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the convent's avowed patroneſs. Theſe having paſſed, a long train of nuns appeared, bearing, like the choriſters, each a burning taper. Next came the reliques of St. Clare, incloſed in vaſes equally precious for their materials and workmanſhip: but they attracted not Lorenzo's attention. The nun who bore the heart occupied him entirely. According to Theodore's deſcription, he doubted not her being the mother St. Urſula. She ſeemed to look round with anxiety. As he ſtood foremoſt in the rank by which the proceſſion paſſed, her eye caught Lorenzo's. A fluſh of joy overſpread her till then pallid cheek. She turned to her companion eagerly.

"We are ſafe," he heard her whiſper, "'tis her brother."

His heart being now at eaſe, Lorenzo gazed with tranquillity upon the remainder of the ſhow. Now appeared its moſt brilliant ornament: it was a machine faſhioned like a throne, rich with jewels, and dazzling with light. It rolled onwards upon con-

cealed wheels, and was guided by ſeveral lovely children dreſſed as ſeraphs. The ſummit was covered with ſilver clouds, upon which reclined the moſt beautiful form that eyes ever witneſſed. It was a damſel repreſenting St. Clare: her dreſs was of ineſtimable price, and round her head a wreath of diamonds formed an artificial glory: but all theſe ornaments yielded to the luſtre of her charms. As ſhe advanced, a murmur of delight ran through the crowd. Even Lorenzo confeſſed ſecretly, that he never beheld more perfect beauty; and had not his heart been Antonia's, it muſt have fallen a ſacrifice to this enchanting girl. As it was, he conſidered her only as a fine ſtatue: ſhe obtained from him no tribute ſave cold admiration; and when ſhe had paſſed him, he thought of her no more.

"Who is ſhe?" aſked a by-ſtander in Lorenzo's hearing.

"One whoſe beauty you muſt often have heard celebrated. Her name is Virginia

de Villa-Franca: ſhe is a penſioner of St. Clare's convent, a relation of the prioreſs, and has been ſelected with juſtice as the ornament of the proceſſion."

The throne moved onwards. It was followed by the prioreſs herſelf: ſhe marched at the head of the remaining nuns with a devout and ſanctified air, and cloſed the proceſſion. She moved on ſlowly: her eyes were raiſed to heaven: her countenance, calm and tranquil, ſeemed abſtracted from all ſublunary things, and no feature betrayed her ſecret pride at diſplaying the pomp and opulence of her convent. She paſſed along, accompanied by the prayers and benedictions of the populace: but how great was the general confuſion and ſurpriſe when Don Ramirez, ſtarting forward, challenged her as his priſoner!

For a moment amazement held the domina ſilent and immoveable; but no ſooner did ſhe recover herſelf, than ſhe exclaimed againſt ſacrilege and impiety, and called upon the people to reſcue a daughter of the

church. They were eagerly preparing to obey her; when Don Ramirez, protected by the archers from their rage, commanded them to forbear, and threatened them with the ſevereſt vengeance of the Inquiſition. At that dreaded word every arm fell, every ſword ſhrunk back into its ſcabbard. The prioreſs herſelf turned pale, and trembled. The general ſilence convinced her that ſhe had nothing to hope but from innocence, and ſhe beſought Don Ramirez in a faltering voice, to inform her of what crime ſhe was accuſed.

"That you ſhall know in time," replied he; "but firſt I muſt ſecure the mother St. Urſula."

"The mother St. Urſula?" repeated the domina faintly.

At this moment caſting her eyes round, ſhe ſaw Lorenzo and the duke, who had followed Don Ramirez.

"Ah! great God!" ſhe cried, claſping her hands together with a frantic air, "I am betrayed."

"Be-

"Betrayed?" replied St. Urſula, who now arrived conducted by ſome of the archers, and followed by the nun her companion in the proceſſion: "not betrayed, but diſcovered. In me recogniſe your accuſer: you know not how well I am inſtructed in your guilt:—Segnor," ſhe continued, turning to Don Ramirez, "I commit myſelf to your cuſtody. I charge the prioreſs of St. Clare with murder, and ſtake my life for the juſtice of my accuſation."

A general cry of ſurpriſe was uttered by the whole audience, and an explanation was loudly demanded. The trembling nuns, terrified at the noiſe and univerſal confuſion, had diſperſed, and fled different ways. Some regained the convent: others ſought refuge in the dwellings of their relations; and many, only ſenſible of their preſent danger, and anxious to eſcape from the tumult, ran through the ſtreets, and wandered they knew not whither. The lovely Virginia was one of the firſt to fly. And in order that ſhe might be better ſeen and

heard,

heard, the people desired that St. Ursula should harangue them from the vacant throne. The nun complied: she ascended the glittering machine, and then addressed the surrounding multitude as follows:

"However strange and unseemly may appear my conduct, when considered to be adopted by a female and a nun, necessity will justify it most fully. A secret, an horrible secret weighs heavy upon my soul: no rest can be mine till I have revealed it to the world, and satisfied that innocent blood which calls from the grave for vengeance. Much have I dared, to gain this opportunity of lightening my conscience. Had I failed in my attempt to reveal the crime, had the domina but suspected that the mystery was known to me, my ruin was inevitable. Angels who watch unceasingly over those who deserve their favour, have enabled me to escape detection. I am now at liberty to relate a tale, whose circumstances will freeze every honest soul with horror. Mine is the task to rend the veil

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from hypocriſy, and ſhew miſguided parents to what dangers the woman is expoſed, who falls under the ſway of a monaſtic tyrant.

" Among the votaries of St. Clare, none was more lovely, none more gentle, than Agnes de Medina. I knew her well: ſhe entruſted to me every ſecret of her heart: I was her friend and confidante, and I loved her with ſincere affection. Nor was I ſingular in my attachment. Her piety unfeigned, her willingneſs to oblige, and her angelic diſpoſition, rendered her the darling of all that was eſtimable in the convent. The prioreſs herſelf, proud, ſcrupulous and forbidding, could not refuſe Agnes that tribute of approbation which ſhe beſtowed upon no one elſe. Every one has ſome fault. Alas! Agnes had her weakneſs: ſhe violated the laws of our order, and incurred the inveterate hate of the unforgiving domina. St. Clare's rules are ſevere: but grown antiquated and neglected, many of late years have either been forgotten,

ten, or changed by univerſal conſent into milder puniſhments. The penance adjudged to the crime of Agnes was moſt cruel, moſt inhuman. The law had been long exploded. Alas! it ſtill exiſted, and the revengeful prioreſs now determined to revive it. This law decreed, that the offender ſhould be plunged into a private dungeon, expreſsly conſtituted to hide from the world for ever the victim of cruelty and tyrannic ſuperſtition. In this dreadful abode ſhe was to lead a perpetual ſolitude, deprived of all ſociety, and believed to be dead by thoſe, whom affection might have prompted to attempt her reſcue. Thus was ſhe to languiſh out the remainder of her days, with no other food than bread and water; and no other comfort than the free indulgence of her tears."

The indignation created by this account was ſo violent, as for ſome moments to interrupt St. Urſula's narrative. When the diſturbance ceaſed, and ſilence again prevailed through the aſſembly, ſhe continued.

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her diſcourſe, while at every word the domina's countenance betrayed her increaſing terrors.

" A council of the twelve elder nuns was called: I was of the number. The prioreſs, in exaggerated colours deſcribed the offence of Agnes, and ſcrupled not to propoſe the revival of this almoſt forgotten law. To the ſhame of our ſex be it ſpoken, that, either ſo abſolute was the domina's will in the convent, or ſo much had diſappointment, ſolitude, and ſelf-denial hardened their hearts and ſoured their tempers, this barbarous propoſal was aſſented to by nine voices out of the twelve. I was not one of the nine. Frequent opportunities had convinced me of the virtues of Agnes, and I loved and pitied her moſt ſincerely. The mothers Bertha and Cornelia joined my party: we made the ſtrongeſt oppoſition poſſible, and the ſuperior found herſelf compelled to change her intention. In ſpite of the majority in her favour, ſhe feared to break with us openly. She knew

that,

that, ſupported by the Medina family, our forces would be too ſtrong for her to cope with: and ſhe alſo knew that, after being once impriſoned, and ſuppoſed dead, ſhould Agnes be diſcovered, her ruin would be inevitable; ſhe therefore gave up her deſign, though with much reluctance. She demanded ſome days to reflect upon a mode of puniſhment, which might be agreeable to the whole community; and ſhe promiſed, that as ſoon as her reſolution was fixed, the ſame council ſhould be again ſummoned. Two days paſſed away: on the evening of the third it was announced, that on the next day Agnes ſhould be examined; and that according to her behaviour on that occaſion her puniſhment ſhould be either ſtrengthened or mitigated.

"On the night preceding this examination, I ſtole to the cell of Agnes at an hour when I ſuppoſed the other nuns to be buried in ſleep. I comforted her to the beſt of my power: I bade her take courage,

told

told her to rely upon the ſupport of her friends, and taught her certain ſigns, by which I might inſtruct her to anſwer the domina's queſtions by an aſſent or negative. Conſcious that her enemy would ſtrive to confuſe, embarraſs, and daunt her, I feared her being enſnared into ſome confeſſion prejudicial to her intereſts. Being anxious to keep my viſit ſecret, I ſtayed with Agnes but a ſhort time. I bade her not to let her ſpirits be caſt down. I mingled my tears with thoſe which ſtreamed down her cheek, embraced her fondly, and was on the point of retiring, when I heard the ſound of ſteps approaching the cell. I ſtarted back. A curtain which veiled a large crucifix offered me a retreat, and I haſtened to place myſelf behind it. The door opened. The prioreſs entered, followed by four other nuns. They advanced towards the bed of Agnes. The ſuperior reproached her with her errors in the bittereſt terms. She told her, that ſhe was a diſgrace to the convent, that ſhe was reſolved to deliver the world

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and herſelf from ſuch a monſter, and commanded her to drink the contents of a goblet now preſented to her by one of the nuns. Aware of the fatal properties of the liquor, and trembling to find herſelf upon the brink of eternity, the unhappy girl ſtrove to excite the domina's pity by the moſt affecting prayers. She ſued for life in terms which might have melted the heart of a fiend. She promiſed to ſubmit patiently to any puniſhment, to ſhame, impriſonment, and torture, might ſhe but be permitted to live! Oh! might ſhe but live another month, or week, or day! Her mercileſs enemy liſtened to her complaints unmoved: ſhe told her, that at firſt ſhe meant to have ſpared her life, and that if ſhe had altered her intention ſhe had to thank the oppoſition of her friends. She continued to inſiſt upon her ſwallowing the poiſon: ſhe bade her recommend herſelf to the Almighty's mercy, not to hers; and aſſured her that in an hour ſhe would be numbered with the dead. Perceiving that it was

vain

vain to implore this unfeeling woman, ſhe attempted to ſpring from her bed, and call for aſſiſtance: ſhe hoped, if ſhe could not eſcape the fate announced to her, at leaſt to have witneſſes of the violence committed. The prioreſs gueſſed her deſign: ſhe ſeized her forcibly by the arm, and puſhed her back upon her pillow; at the ſame time drawing a dagger, and placing it at the breaſt of the unfortunate Agnes, ſhe proteſted that if ſhe uttered a ſingle cry, or heſitated a ſingle moment to drink the poiſon, ſhe would pierce her heart that inſtant. Already half-dead with fear, ſhe could make no further reſiſtance. The nun approached with the fatal goblet; the domina obliged her to take it, and ſwallow the contents. She drank, and the horrid deed was accompliſhed. The nuns then ſeated themſelves round the bed; they anſwered her groans with reproaches; they interrupted with ſarcaſms the prayers in which ſhe recommended her parting ſoul to mercy: they threatened her with hea-

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ven's vengeance and eternal perdition: they bade her deſpair of pardon, and ſtrowed with yet ſharper thorns death's painful pillow. Such were the ſufferings of this young unfortunate, till releaſed by fate from the malice of her tormentors. She expired in horror of the paſt, in fears for the future; and her agonies were ſuch as muſt have amply gratified the hate and vengeance of her enemies. As ſoon as her victim ceaſed to breathe, the domina retired, and was followed by her accomplices.

"It was now that I ventured from my concealment. I dared not to aſſiſt my unhappy friend, aware that, without preſerving her, I ſhould only have brought on myſelf the ſame deſtruction. Shocked and terrified beyond expreſſion at this horrid ſcene, ſcarcely had I ſufficient ſtrength to regain my cell. As I [illegible]ched the door of that of Agnes, I ventured to look towards the bed on which lay her lifeleſs body, once ſo lovely and ſo ſweet! I breathed a prayer for

for her departed ſpirit, and vowed to revenge her death by the ſhame and puniſhment of her aſſaſſins. With danger and difficulty I have kept my oath. I unwarily dropped ſome words at the funeral of Agnes, while thrown off my guard by exceſſive grief, which alarmed the guilty conſcience of the prioreſs. My every action was obſerved; my every ſtep was traced. I was conſtantly ſurrounded by the ſuperior's ſpies. It was long before I could find the means of conveying to the unhappy girl's relations an intimation of my ſecret. It was given out, that Agnes had expired ſuddenly: this account was credited not only by her friends in Madrid, but even by thoſe within the convent. The poiſon had left no marks upon her body: no one ſuſpected the true cauſe of her death, and it remained unknown to all, ſave the aſſaſſins and myſelf.

"I have no more to ſay; for what I have already ſaid, I will anſwer with my life. I repeat, that the prioreſs is a murdereſs; that ſhe

ſhe has driven from the world, perhaps from heaven, an unfortunate, whoſe offence was light and venial; that ſhe has abuſed the power intruſted to her hands, and has been a tyrant, a barbarian, and an hypocrite. I alſo accuſe the four nuns, Violante, Camilla, Alix, and Mariana, as being her accomplices, and equally criminal."

Here St. Urſula ended her narrative. It created horror and ſurpriſe throughout; but when ſhe related the inhuman murder of Agnes, the indignation of the mob was ſo audibly teſtified, that it was ſcarcely poſſible to hear the concluſion. This confuſion increaſed with every moment. At length a multitude of voices exclaimed, that the prioreſs ſhould be given up to their fury. To this Don Ramirez poſitively refuſed to conſent. Even Lorenzo bade the people remember, that ſhe had undergone no trial, and adviſed them to leave her puniſhment to the Inquiſition. All repreſentations were fruitleſs; the diſturbance grew

ſtill

ſtill more violent, and the populace more exaſperated. In vain did Ramirez attempt to convey his priſoner out of the throng. Wherever he turned, a band of rioters barred his paſſage, and demanded her being delivered over to them more loudly than before. Ramirez ordered his attendants to cut their way through the multitude. Oppreſſed by numbers, it was impoſſible for them to draw their ſwords. He threatened the mob with the vengeance of the Inquiſition: but, in this moment of popular phrenſy, even this dreadful name had loſt its effect. Though regret for his ſiſter made him look upon the prioreſs with abhorrence, Lorenzo could not help pitying a woman in a ſituation ſo terrible: but in ſpite of all his exertions and thoſe of the duke, of Don Ramirez and the archers, the people continued to preſs onwards. They forced a paſſage through the guards who protected their deſtined victim, dragged her from her ſhelter, and proceeded to take upon her a moſt ſummary and cruel

vengeance. Wild with terror, and ſcarcely knowing what ſhe ſaid, the wretched woman ſhrieked for a moment's mercy: ſhe proteſted that ſhe was innocent of the death of Agnes, and could clear herſelf from the ſuſpicion beyond the power of doubt. The rioters heeded nothing but the gratification of their barbarous vengeance. They refuſed to liſten to her: they ſhewed her every ſort of inſult, loaded her with mud and filth, and called her by the moſt opprobrious appellations. They tore her one from another, and each new tormentor was more ſavage than the former. They ſtifled with howls and execrations her ſhrill cries for mercy, and dragged her through the ſtreets, ſpurning her, trampling her, and treating her with every ſpecies of cruelty which hate or vindictive fury could invent. At length a flint, aimed by ſome well-directing hand, ſtruck her full upon the temple. She ſank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miſerable exiſtence. Yet though ſhe

no longer felt their inſults, the rioters ſtill exerciſed their impotent rage upon her lifeleſs body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-uſed it, till it became no more than a maſs of fleſh, unſightly, ſhapeleſs, and diſguſting.

Unable to prevent this ſhocking event, Lorenzo and his friends had beheld it with the utmoſt horror: but they were rouſed from their compelled inactivity, on hearing that the mob were attacking the convent of St. Clare. The incenſed populace, confounding the innocent with the guilty, had reſolved to ſacrifice all the nuns of that order to their rage, and not to leave one ſtone of the building upon another. Alarmed at this intelligence, they haſtened to the convent, reſolved to defend it if poſſible, or at leaſt to reſcue the inhabitants from the fury of the rioters. Moſt of the nuns had fled, but a few ſtill remained in their habitation. Their ſituation was truly dangerous. However, as they had taken the precaution of faſtening the inner gates, with

this aſſiſtance Lorenzo hoped to repel the mob, till Don Ramirez ſhould return to him with a more ſufficient force.

Having been conducted by the former diſturbance to the diſtance of ſome ſtreets from the convent, he did not immediately reach it. When he arrived, the throng ſurrounding it was ſo exceſſive, as to prevent his approaching the gates. In the interim, the populace beſieged the building with perſevering rage: they battered the walls, threw lighted torches in at the windows, and ſwore that by break of day not a nun of St. Clare's order ſhould be left alive. Lorenzo had juſt ſucceeded in piercing his way through the crowd, when one of the gates was forced open. The rioters poured into the interior part of the building, where they exerciſed their vengeance upon every thing which found itſelf in their paſſage. They broke the furniture into pieces, tore down the pictures, deſtroyed the reliques, and in their hatred of her ſervant forgot all reſpect to the ſaint. Some employed

ployed themſelves in ſearching out the nuns, others in pulling down parts of the convent, and others again in ſetting fire to the pictures and valuable furniture which it contained. Theſe latter produced the moſt deciſive deſolation. Indeed the conſequences of their action were more ſudden than themſelves had expected or wiſhed. The flames riſing from the burning piles caught part of the building, which being old and dry, the conflagration ſpread with rapidity from room to room. The walls were ſoon ſhaken by the devouring element. The columns gave way, the roofs came tumbling down upon the rioters, and cruſhed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but ſhrieks and groans. The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole preſented a ſcene of devaſtation and horror.

Lorenzo was ſhocked at having been the cauſe, however innocent, of this frightful diſturbance: he endeavoured to repair his fault by protecting the helpleſs inhabi-

tants of the convent. He entered it with the mob, and exerted himſelf to repreſs the prevailing fury, till the ſudden and alarming progreſs of the flames compelled him to provide for his own ſafety. The people now hurried out as eagerly as they had before thronged in; but their numbers clogging up the door-way, and the fire gaining upon them rapidly, many of them periſhed ere they had time to effect their eſcape. Lorenzo's good fortune directed him to a ſmall door in a farther aiſle of the chapel. The bolt was already undrawn: he opened the door, and found himſelf at the foot of St. Clare's ſepulchre.

Here he ſtopped to breathe. The duke and ſome of his attendants had followed him, and thus were in ſecurity for the preſent. They now conſulted what ſteps they ſhould take to eſcape from this ſcene of diſturbance; but their deliberations were conſiderably interrupted by the ſight of volumes of fire riſing from amidſt the convent's maſſy walls, by the noiſe of ſome heavy

arch

arch tumbling down in ruins, or by the mingled ſhrieks of the nuns and rioters, either ſuffocating in the preſs, periſhing in the flames, or cruſhed beneath the weight of the falling manſion.

Lorenzo enquired, whither the wicket led? He was anſwered, To the garden of the Capuchins; and it was reſolved to explore an outlet upon that ſide. Accordingly the duke raiſed the latch, and paſſed into the adjoining cemetery. The attendants followed without ceremony. Lorenzo, being the laſt, was alſo on the point of quitting the colonnade, when he ſaw the door of the ſepulchre opened ſoftly. Some one looked out, but on perceiving ſtrangers uttered a loud ſhriek, ſtarted back again, and flew down the marble ſtairs.

"What can this mean?" cried Lorenzo: "Here is ſome myſtery concealed. Follow me without delay!"

Thus ſaying, he haſtened into the ſepulchre, and purſued the perſon who continued to fly before him. The duke knew not the

cauſe of this exclamation, but, ſuppoſing that he had good reaſons for it, followed him without heſitation. The others did the ſame and the whole party ſoon arrived at the foot of the ſtairs. The upper door having been left open, the neighbouring flames darted from above a ſufficient light to enable Lorenzo's catching a glance of the fugitive running through the long paſſages and diſtant vaults; but when a ſudden turn deprived him of this aſſiſtance, total darkneſs ſucceeded, and he could only trace the object of his enquiry by the faint echo of retiring feet. The purſuers were now compelled to proceed with caution: as well as they could judge, the fugitive alſo ſeemed to ſlacken pace, for they heard the ſteps follow each other at longer intervals. They at length were bewildered by the labyrinth of paſſages, and diſperſed in various directions. Carried away by his eagerneſs to clear up this myſtery, and to penetrate into which he was impelled by a movement ſecret and unaccountable, Lorenzo

heeded

heeded not this circumſtance till he found himſelf in total ſolitude. The noiſe of foot-ſteps had ceaſed, all was ſilent around, and no clue offered itſelf to guide him to the flying perſon. He ſtopped to reflect on the means moſt likely to aid his purſuit. He was perſuaded that no common cauſe would have induced the fugitive to ſeek that dreary place at an hour ſo unuſual: the cry which he had heard, ſeemed uttered in a voice of terror; and he was convinced that ſome myſtery was attached to this event. After ſome minutes paſſed in heſitation, he continued to proceed, feeling his way along the walls of the paſſage. He had already paſſed ſome time in this ſlow progreſs, when he deſcried a ſpark of light glimmering at a diſtance. Guided by this obſervation, and having drawn his ſword, he bent his ſteps towards the place whence the beam ſeemed to be emitted.

It proceeded from the lamp which flamed before St. Clare's ſtatue. Before it ſtood ſeveral females, their white garments ſtream-

ing in the blaſt as it howled along the vaulted dungeons. Curious to know what had brought them together in this melancholy ſpot, Lorenzo drew near with precaution. The ſtrangers ſeemed earneſtly engaged in converſation. They heard not Lorenzo's ſteps, and he approached unobſerved, till he could hear their voices diſtinctly.

"I proteſt," continued ſhe who was ſpeaking when he arrived, and to whom the reſt were liſtening with great attention; "I proteſt that I ſaw them with my own eyes. I flew down the ſteps, they purſued me, and I eſcaped falling into their hands with difficulty. Had it not been for the lamp, I ſhould never have found you."

"And what could bring them hither?" ſaid another in a trembling voice; "do you think that they were looking for us?"

"God grant that my fears may be falſe," rejoined the firſt; "but I doubt they are murderers! If they diſcover us, we are loſt! As for me, my fate is certain. My affinity

to

to the prioreſs will be a ſufficient crime to condemn me; and though till now theſe vaults have afforded me a retreat . . . . . "

Here looking up, her eye fell upon Lorenzo, who had continued to approach ſlowly.

"The murderers!" ſhe cried.

She ſtarted away from the ſtatue's pedeſtal on which ſhe had been ſeated, and attempted to eſcape by flight. Her companions at the ſame moment uttered a terrified ſcream, while Lorenzo arreſted the fugitive by the arm. Frightened and deſperate, ſhe ſank upon her knees before him.

"Spare me!" ſhe exclaimed; "for Chriſt's ſake, ſpare me! I am innocent, indeed I am!"

While ſhe ſpoke, her voice was almoſt choked with fear. The beams of the lamp darting full upon her face, which was unveiled, Lorenzo recognized the beautiful Virginia de Villa-Franca. He haſtened to raiſe her from the ground, and be-

ſought her to take courage. He promiſed to protect her from the rioters, aſſured her that her retreat was ſtill a ſecret, and that ſhe might depend upon his readineſs to defend her to the laſt drop of his blood. During this converſation, the nuns had thrown themſelves into various attitudes: one knelt, and addreſſed herſelf to Heaven; another hid her face in the lap of her neighbour; ſome liſtened motionleſs with fear to the diſcourſe of the ſuppoſed aſſaſſin; while others embraced the ſtatue of St. Clare, and implored her protection with frantic cries. On perceiving their miſtake, they crowded round Lorenzo, and heaped benedictions on him by dozens. He found that on hearing the threats of the mob, and terrified by the cruelties which from the convent towers they had ſeen inflicted on the ſuperior, many of the penſioners and nuns had taken refuge in the ſepulchre. Among the former, was to be reckoned the lovely Virginia: nearly related to the prioreſs, ſhe had more reaſon than the reſt

reſt to dread the rioters, and now beſought Lorenzo earneſtly not to abandon her to their rage. Her companions, moſt of whom were women of noble family, made the ſame requeſt, which he readily granted: he promiſed not to quit them till he had ſeen each of them ſafe in the arms of her relations. But he adviſed their deferring to quit the ſepulchre for ſome time longer, when the popular fury ſhould be ſomewhat calmed, and the arrival of military force have diſperſed the multitude.

"Would to God," cried Virginia, "that I were already ſafe in my mother's embraces! How ſay you, Segnor? will it be long ere we may leave this place? Every moment that I paſs here, I paſs in torture!"

"I hope, not long," ſaid he; "but till you can proceed with ſecurity, this ſepulchre will prove an impenetrable aſylum. Here you run no riſque of a diſcovery, and I would adviſe your remaining quiet for the next two or three hours."

"Two

"Two or three hours?" exclaimed ſiſter Helena: "If I ſtay another hour in theſe vaults, I ſhall expire with fear! Not the wealth of worlds ſhould bribe me to undergo again what I have ſuffered ſince my coming hither. Bleſſed Virgin! To be in this melancholy place in the middle of night, ſurrounded by the mouldering bodies of my deceaſed companions, and expecting every moment to be torn in pieces by their ghoſts who wander about me, and complain, and groan, and wail in accents that make my blood run cold .... Chriſt Jeſus! It is enough to drive me to madneſs!"

"Excuſe me," replied Lorenzo, "if I am ſurpriſed, that while menaced by real woes you are capable of yielding to imaginary dangers. Theſe terrors are puerile and groundleſs: combat them, holy ſiſter; I have promiſed to guard you from the rioters, but againſt the attacks of ſuperſtition you muſt depend for protection upon yourſelf. The idea of ghoſts is ridiculous

in the extreme; and if you continue to be swayed by ideal terrors . . . . . ."

"Ideal?" exclaimed the nuns with one voice! "Why, we heard it ourselves, Segnor! Every one of us heard it! It was frequently repeated, and it sounded every time more melancholy and deep. You will never persuade me that we could all have been deceived. Not we, indeed; no, no; had the noise been merely created by fancy . . . ."

"Hark! hark!" interrupted Virginia, in a voice of terror; "God preserve us! There it is again!"

The nuns clasped their hands together, and sank upon their knees. Lorenzo looked round him eagerly, and was on the point of yielding to the fears which already had possessed the women. Universal silence prevailed. He examined the vault, but nothing was to be seen. He now prepared to address the nuns, and ridicule their childish apprehensions, when his attention was arrested by a deep and long-drawn groan.

"What

"What was that?" he cried, and ſtarted.——

"There, Segnor!" ſaid Helena: "Now you muſt be convinced! You have heard the noiſe yourſelf! Now judge whether our terrors are imaginary. Since we have been here, that groaning has been repeated almoſt every five minutes. Doubtleſs it proceeds from ſome ſoul in pain who wiſhes to be prayed out of purgatory: but none of us dare aſk it the queſtion. As for me, were I to ſee an apparition, the fright, I am very certain, would kill me out of hand."

As ſhe ſaid this, a ſecond groan was heard yet more diſtinctly. The nuns croſſed themſelves, and haſtened to repeat their prayers againſt evil ſpirits. Lorenzo liſtened attentively. He even thought that he could diſtinguiſh ſounds as of one ſpeaking in complaint, but diſtance rendered them inarticulate. The noiſe ſeemed to come from the midſt of the ſmall vault in which he and the nuns then were, and

which

which a multitude of paſſages branching out in various directions formed into a ſort of ſtar. Lorenzo's curioſity, which was ever awake, made him anxious to ſolve this myſtery. He deſired that ſilence might be kept. The nuns obeyed him. All was huſhed till the general ſtillneſs was again diſturbed by the groaning, which was repeated ſeveral times ſucceſſively. He perceived it to be moſt audible, when upon following the ſound he was conducted cloſe to the ſhrine of St. Clare.

"The noiſe comes from hence," ſaid he: "Whoſe is this ſtatue?"

Helena, to whom he addreſſed the queſtion, pauſed for a moment. Suddenly ſhe clapped her hands together.

"Aye!" cried ſhe, "it muſt be ſo. I have diſcovered the meaning of theſe groans."

The nuns crowded round her, and beſought her eagerly to explain herſelf. She gravely replied, that for time immemorial the ſtatue had been famous for performing miracles.

miracles. From this she inferred, that the saint was concerned at the conflagration of a convent which she protected, and expressed her grief by audible lamentations. Not having equal faith in the miraculous saint, Lorenzo did not think this solution of the mystery quite so satisfactory, as the nuns, who subscribed to it without hesitation. In one point 'tis true that he agreed with Helena. He suspected that the groans proceeded from the statue: the more he listened the more was he confirmed in this idea. He drew nearer to the image, designing to inspect it more closely: but perceiving his intention, the nuns besought him for God's sake to desist, since, if he touched the statue, his death was inevitable.

"And in what consists the danger?" said he.

"Mother of God! In what?" replied Helena, ever eager to relate a miraculous adventure: "If you had only heard the hundredth part of those marvellous stories

about

about this ſtatue, which the domina uſed to recount! She aſſured us often and often, that if we only dared to lay a finger upon it, we might expect the moſt fatal conſequences. Among other things ſhe told us, that a robber having entered theſe vaults by night, he obſerved yonder ruby, whoſe value is ineſtimable. Do you ſee it, Segnor? It ſparkles upon the third finger of the hand in which ſhe holds a crown of thorns. This jewel naturally excited the villain's cupidity. He reſolved to make himſelf maſter of it. For this purpoſe he aſcended the pedeſtal; he ſupported himſelf by graſping the ſaint's right arm, and extended his own towards the ring. What was his ſurpriſe, when he ſaw the ſtatue's hand raiſed in a poſture of menace, and heard her lips pronounce his eternal perdition! Penetrated with awe and conſternation, he deſiſted from his attempt, and prepared to quit the ſepulchre. In this he alſo failed. Flight was denied him. He found it impoſſible to diſengage the hand

which

which reſted upon the right arm of the ſtatue. In vain did he ſtruggle: he remained fixed to the image, till the inſupportable and fiery anguiſh which darted itſelf through his veins, compelled his ſhrieking for aſſiſtance. The ſepulchre was now filled with ſpectators. The villain confeſſed his ſacrilege, and was only releaſed by the ſeparation of his hand from his body. It has remained ever ſince faſtened to the image. The robber turned hermit, and led ever after an exemplary life. But yet the ſaint's decree was performed; and tradition ſays, that he continues to haunt this ſepulchre, and implore St. Clare's pardon with groans and lamentations. Now I think of it, thoſe which we have juſt heard, may very poſſibly have been uttered by the ghoſt of this ſinner: but of this I will not be poſitive. All that I can ſay is, that ſince that time no one has ever dared to touch the ſtatue. Then do not be fool-hardy, good Segnor! For the love of heaven, give up your deſign, nor

expoſe

expoſe yourſelf unneceſſarily to certain deſtruction."

Not being convinced that his deſtruction would be ſo certain as Helena ſeemed to think it, Lorenzo perſiſted in his reſolution. The nuns beſought him to deſiſt, in piteous terms, and even pointed out the robber's hand, which was in effect ſtill viſible upon the arm of the ſtatue. This proof, as they imagined, muſt convince him. It was very far from doing ſo; and they were greatly ſcandalized when he declared his ſuſpicion that the dried and ſhrivelled fingers had been placed there by order of the prioreſs. In ſpite of their prayers and threats he approached the ſtatue. He ſprang over the iron rails which defended it, and the ſaint underwent a thorough examination. The image at firſt appeared to be of ſtone, but proved on further inſpection to be formed of no more ſolid materials than coloured wood. He ſhook it, and attempted to move it: but it appeared to be of a piece with the baſe which it ſtood upon. He examined

amined it over and over; ſtill no clue guided him to the ſolution of this myſtery, for which the nuns were become equally ſolicitous, when they ſaw that he touched the ſtatue with impunity. He pauſed, and liſtened: the groans were repeated at intervals, and he was convinced of being in the ſpot neareſt to them. He muſed upon this ſingular event, and ran over the ſtatue with enquiring eyes. Suddenly they reſted upon the ſhrivelled hand. It ſtruck him, that ſo particular an injunction was not given without cauſe, not to touch the arm of the image. He again aſcended the pedeſtal: he examined the object of his attention, and diſcovered a ſmall knob of iron concealed between the ſaint's ſhoulder and what was ſuppoſed to have been the hand of the robber. This obſervation delighted him. He applied his fingers to the knob, and preſſed it down forcibly. Immediately a rumbling noiſe was heard within the ſtatue, as if a chain tightly ſtretched was flying back. Startled at the ſound, the timid nuns

ſtarted

ſtarted away, prepared to haſten from the vault at the firſt appearance of danger. All remaining quiet and ſtill, they again gathered round Lorenzo, and beheld his proceedings with anxious curioſity.

Finding that nothing followed this diſcovery, he deſcended. As he took his hand from the ſaint, ſhe trembled beneath his touch. This created new terrors in the ſpectators, who believed the ſtatue to be animated. Lorenzo's ideas upon the ſubject were widely different. He eaſily comprehended, that the noiſe which he had heard was occaſioned by his having looſened a chain which attached the image to its pedeſtal. He once more attempted to move it, and ſucceeded without much exertion. He placed it upon the ground, and then perceived the pedeſtal to be hollow, and covered at the opening with an heavy iron grate.

This excited ſuch general curioſity, that the ſiſters forgot both their real and imaginary dangers. Lorenzo proceeded to raiſe

the

the grate, in which the nuns aſſiſted him to the utmoſt of their ſtrength. The attempt was accompliſhed with little difficulty. A deep abyſs now preſented itſelf before them, whoſe thick obſcurity the eye ſtrove in vain to pierce. The rays of the lamp were too feeble to be of much aſſiſtance. Nothing was diſcernible, ſave a flight of rough unſhapen ſteps, which ſank into the yawning gulph, and were ſoon loſt in darkneſs. The groans were heard no more: but all believed them to have aſcended from this cavern. As he bent over it, Lorenzo fancied that he diſtinguiſhed ſomething bright twinkling through the gloom. He gazed attentively upon the ſpot where it ſhowed itſelf, and was convinced that he ſaw a ſmall ſpark of light, now viſible, now diſappearing. He communicated this circumſtance to the nuns: they alſo perceived the ſpark: but when he declared his intention to deſcend into the cave, they united to oppoſe his reſolution. All their remonſtrances could not

prevail

prevail on him to alter it. None of them had courage enough to accompany him; neither could he think of depriving them of the lamp. Alone therefore, and in darkneſs, he prepared to purſue his deſign, while the nuns were contented to offer up prayers for his ſucceſs and ſafety.

The ſteps were ſo narrow and uneven, that to deſcend them was like walking down the ſide of a precipice. The obſcurity by which he was ſurrounded, rendered his footing inſecure. He was obliged to proceed with great caution, leſt he ſhould miſs the ſteps, and fall into the gulph below him. This he was ſeveral times on the point of doing. However, he arrived ſooner upon ſolid ground than he had expected. He now found, that the thick darkneſs and impenetrable miſts which reigned through the cavern, had deceived him into the belief of its being much more profound than it proved upon inſpection. He reached the foot of the ſtairs unhurt: he now ſtopped, and looked round for the

ſpark, which had before caught his attention. He ſought it in vain: all was dark and gloomy. He liſtened for the groans; but his ear caught no ſound except the diſtant murmur of the nuns above, as in low voices they repeated their ave-marias. He ſtood irreſolute to which ſide he ſhould addreſs his ſteps. At all events he determined to proceed: he did ſo, but ſlowly, fearful leſt, inſtead of approaching, he ſhould be retiring from the object of his ſearch. The groans ſeemed to announce one in pain, or at leaſt in ſorrow, and he hoped to have the power of relieving the mourner's calamities. A plaintive tone, ſounding at no great diſtance, at length reached his hearing: he bent his courſe joyfully towards it. It became more audible as he advanced; and he ſoon beheld again the ſpark of light, which a low projecting wall had hitherto concealed from him.

It proceeded from a ſmall lamp which was placed upon an heap of ſtones, and whoſe

whoſe faint and melancholy rays ſerved rather to point out than diſpel the horrors of a narrow gloomy dungeon, formed in one ſide of the cavern: it alſo ſhewed ſeveral other receſſes of ſimilar conſtruction, but whoſe depth was buried in obſcurity. Coldly played the light upon the damp walls, whoſe dew-ſtained ſurface gave back a feeble reflection. A thick and peſtilential fog clouded the height of the vaulted dungeon. As Lorenzo advanced, he felt a piercing chillneſs ſpread itſelf through his veins. The frequent groans ſtill engaged him to move forwards. He turned towards them, and by the lamp's glimmering beams beheld, in a corner of this loathſome abode, a creature ſtretched upon a bed of ſtraw, ſo wretched, ſo emaciated, ſo pale, that he doubted to think her woman. She was half naked: her long diſhevelled hair fell in diſorder over her face, and almoſt entirely concealed it. One waſted arm hung liſtleſsly upon a tattered rug, which covered her convulſed and ſhivering limbs: the

other was wrapped round a ſmall bundle, and held it cloſely to her boſom. A large roſary lay near her: oppoſite to her was a crucifix, on which ſhe bent her ſunk eyes fixedly, and by her ſide ſtood a baſket and a ſmall earthen pitcher.

Lorenzo ſtopped: he was petrified with horror. He gazed upon the miſerable object with diſguſt and pity. He trembled at the ſpectacle: he grew ſick at heart: his ſtrength failed him, and his limbs were unable to ſupport his weight. He was obliged to lean againſt the low wall which was near him, unable to go forward or to addreſs the ſufferer. She caſt her eyes towards the ſtair-caſe: the wall concealed Lorenzo, and ſhe obſerved him not.

"No one comes!" ſhe at length murmured.

As ſhe ſpoke, her voice was hollow, and rattled in her throat: ſhe ſighed bitterly.

"No one comes!" ſhe repeated: "no! they have forgotten me! they will come no more!"

She

She paused for a moment; then continued mournfully:

"Two days! two long, long days, and yet no food! and yet no hope, no comfort! Foolish woman! how can I wish to lengthen a life so wretched!—Yet such a death! O God! to perish by such a death! to linger out such ages in torture! Till now, I knew not what it was to hunger!—Hark!—No! no one comes: they will come no more."

She was silent. She shivered, and drew the rug over her naked shoulders:

"I am very cold: I am still unused to the damps of this dungeon: 'tis strange: but no matter. Colder shall I soon be, and yet not feel it. I shall be cold, cold as thou art."

She looked at the bundle, which lay upon her breast. She bent over it, and kissed it: then drew back hastily, and shuddered with disgust:

"It was once so sweet! It would have been so lovely, so like him! I have lost it for ever. How a few days have changed it! I should not know it again myself.

Yet it is dear to me. God! how dear!—I will forget what it is! I will only remember what it was, and love it as well, as when it was ſo ſweet! ſo lovely! ſo like him!—I thought that I had wept away all my tears, but here is one ſtill lingering."

She wiped her eyes with a treſs of her hair. She put out her hand for the pitcher, and reached it with difficulty. She caſt into it a look of hopeleſs enquiry. She ſighed, and replaced it upon the ground.

"Quite a void!—Not a drop!—Not one drop left to cool my ſcorched-up burning palate!—Now would I give treaſures for a draught of water!—And they are God's ſervants who make me ſuffer thus!—They think themſelves holy, while they torture me like fiends!—They are cruel and unfeeling; and 'tis they who bid me repent; and 'tis they who threaten me with eternal perdition! Saviour, Saviour! you think not ſo!"

She again fixed her eyes upon the crucifix, took her roſary, and, while ſhe told her

her beads, the quick motion of her lips declared her to be praying with fervency.

While he liſtened to her melancholy accents, Lorenzo's ſenſibility became yet more violently affected. The firſt ſight of ſuch miſery had given a ſenſible ſhock to his feelings: but that being paſt, he now advanced towards the captive. She heard his ſteps, and, uttering a cry of joy, dropped the roſary.

"Hark! hark! kark!" ſhe cried, "ſome one comes!"

She ſtrove to raiſe herſelf, but her ſtrength was unequal to the attempt; ſhe fell back, and, as ſhe ſank again upon the bed of ſtraw, Lorenzo heard the rattling of heavy chains. He ſtill approached, while the priſoner thus continued:

"Is it you, Camilla? You are come then at laſt? Oh! it was time! I thought that you had forſaken me; that I was doomed to periſh of hunger. Give me to drink, Camilla, for pity's ſake; I am faint with

long faſting, and grown ſo weak that I cannot raiſe myſelf from the ground. Good Camilla, give me to drink, leſt I expire before you."

Fearing that ſurpriſe in her enfeebled ſtate might be fatal, Lorenzo was at a loſs how to addreſs her.

"It is not Camilla," ſaid he at length, ſpeaking in a ſlow and gentle voice.

"Who is it then?" replied the ſufferer; "Alix, perhaps, or Violante. My eyes are grown ſo dim and feeble, that I cannot diſtinguiſh your features; but whichever it is, if your breaſt is ſenſible of the leaſt compaſſion, if you are not more cruel than wolves and tigers, take pity on my ſufferings. You know that I am dying for want of ſuſtenance. This is the third day ſince theſe lips have received nouriſhment. Do you bring me food? Or come you only to announce my death, and learn how long I have yet to exiſt in agony?"

"You miſtake my buſineſs," replied Lorenzo;

renzo; "I am no emiſſary of the cruel priorefs. I pity your ſorrows, and come hither to relieve them."

"To relieve them?" repeated the captive; "ſaid you, to relieve them?"

At the ſame time ſtarting from the ground, and ſupporting herſelf upon her hands, ſhe gazed upon the ſtranger earneſtly.

"Great God!—Is it no illuſion?—A man? Speak! Who are you? What brings you hither? Come you to ſave me, to reſtore me to liberty, to life and light? Oh! ſpeak, ſpeak quickly, leſt I encourage an hope whoſe diſappointment will deſtroy me."

"Be calm!" replied Lorenzo, in a voice ſoothing and compaſſionate; "the domina of whoſe cruelty you complain, has already paid the forfeit of her offences: you have nothing more to fear from her. A few minutes will reſtore you to liberty and the embraces of your friends, from whom you have been ſecluded. You may rely upon my

protection. Give me your hand, and be not fearful. Let me conduct you where you may receive thoſe attentions which your feeble ſtate requires."

"Oh! yes! yes! yes!" cried the priſoner with an exulting ſhriek; "there is a God then, and a juſt one! Joy! Joy! I ſhall once more breathe the freſh air, and view the light of the glorious ſunbeams! I will go with you! Stranger, I will go with you! Oh! Heaven will bleſs you for pitying an unfortunate! But this too muſt go with me," ſhe added, pointing to the ſmall bundle, which ſhe ſtill claſped to her boſom; "I cannot part with this. I will bear it away: it ſhall convince the world how dreadful are the abodes ſo falſely termed religious. Good ſtranger! lend me your hand to riſe; I am faint with want, and ſorrow, and ſickneſs, and my ſtrength has quite forſaken me! So, that is well!"

As Lorenzo ſtooped to raiſe her, the beams of the lamp ſtruck full upon his face.

"Almighty

"Almighty God!" ſhe exclaimed: "Is it poſſible?—That look! thoſe features!—Oh! yes, it is, it is . . . . ."

She extended her arms to throw them round him, but her enfeebled frame was unable to ſuſtain the emotions which agitated her boſom. She fainted, and again ſank upon the bed of ſtraw.

Lorenzo was ſurpriſed at her laſt exclamation. He thought that he had before heard ſuch accents as her hollow voice had juſt formed, but where, he could not remember. He ſaw, that in her dangerous ſituation immediate phyſical aid was abſolutely neceſſary, and he haſtened to convey her from the dungeon. He was at firſt prevented from doing ſo by a ſtrong chain faſtened round the priſoner's body, and fixing her to the neighbouring wall. However, his natural ſtrength being aided by anxiety to relieve the unfortunate, he ſoon forced out the ſtaple, to which one end of the chain was attached: then taking the captive in his arms, he bent his courſe to-

wards the ſtair-caſe. The rays of the lamp above, as well as the murmur of female voices, guided his ſteps. He gained the ſtairs, and in a few minutes after arrived at the iron-grate.

The nuns during his abſence had been terribly tormented by curioſity and apprehenſion. They were equally ſurpriſed and delighted on ſeeing him ſuddenly emerge from the cave. Every heart was filled with compaſſion for the miſerable creature, whom he bore in his arms. While the nuns, and Virginia in particular, employed themſelves in ſtriving to recall her to her ſenſes, Lorenzo related in few words the manner of his finding her. He then obſerved to them, that by this time the tumult muſt have been quelled, and that he could now conduct them to their friends without danger. All were eager to quit the ſepulchre. Still, to prevent all poſſibility of ill-uſage, they beſought Lorenzo to venture out firſt alone, and examine whether the coaſt was clear. With this requeſt he complied.

Helena offered to conduct him to the ſtair-caſe, and they were on the point of depart-ing, when a ſtrong light flaſhed from ſeve-ral paſſages upon the adjacent walls. At the ſame time ſteps were heard of people approaching haſtily, and whoſe number ſeemed to be conſiderable. The nuns were greatly alarmed at this circumſtance; they ſuppoſed their retreat to be diſcovered, and the rioters to be advancing in purſuit of them. Haſtily quitting the priſoner, who remained inſenſible, they crowded round Lorenzo, and claimed his promiſe to protect them. Virginia alone forgot her own danger by ſtriving to relieve the ſorrows of another. She ſupported the ſufferer's head upon her knees, bathing her temples with roſe-water, chafing her cold hands, and ſprinkling her face with tears which were drawn from her by compaſſion. The ſtrangers approaching nearer, Lorenzo was enabled to diſpel the fears of the ſup-pliants. His name pronounced by a num-ber of voices, among which he diſtinguiſh-ed the duke's, pealed along the vaults,

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and convinced him that he was the object of their ſearch. He communicated this intelligence to the nuns, who received it with rapture. A few moments after confirmed his idea. Don Ramirez as well as the duke appeared, followed by attendants with torches. They had been ſeeking him through the vaults, in order to let him know that the mob was diſperſed, and the riot entirely over. Lorenzo recounted briefly his adventure in the cavern, and explained how much the unknown was in want of medical aſſiſtance. He beſought the duke to take charge of her, as well as of the nuns and penſioners.

"As for me," ſaid he, "other cares demand my attention. While you with one half of the archers convey theſe ladies to their reſpective homes, I wiſh the other half to be left with me. I will examine the cavern below, and pervade the moſt ſecret receſſes of the ſepulchre. I cannot reſt till convinced that yonder wretched victim was the only one confined by ſuperſtition in theſe vaults."

The duke applauded his intention. Don Ramirez offered to aſſiſt him in his enquiry, and his propoſal was accepted with gratitude. The nuns, having made their acknowledgments to Lorenzo, committed themſelves to the care of his uncle, and were conducted from the ſepulchre. Virginia requeſted that the unknown might be given to her in charge, and promiſed to let Lorenzo know, whenever ſhe was ſufficiently recovered to accept his viſits. In truth, ſhe made this promiſe more from conſideration for herſelf, than for either Lorenzo or the captive. She had witneſſed his politeneſs, gentleneſs, and intrepidity with ſenſible emotion. She wiſhed earneſtly to preſerve his acquaintance; and in addition to the ſentiments of pity which the priſoner excited, ſhe hoped that her attention to this unfortunate would raiſe her a degree in the eſteem of Lorenzo. She had no occaſion to trouble herſelf upon this head. The kindneſs already diſplayed by her, and the tender concern which ſhe had ſhewn for the ſufferer, had gained her an

exalted place in his good graces. While occupied in alleviating the captive's ſorrows, the nature of her employment adorned her with new charms, and rendered her beauty a thouſand times more intereſting. Lorenzo viewed her with admiration and delight: he conſidered her as a miniſtering angel deſcended to the aid of afflicted innocence; nor could his heart have reſiſted her attractions, had it not been ſteeled by the remembrance of Antonia.

The duke now conveyed the nuns in ſafety to the dwellings of their reſpective friends. The reſcued priſoner was ſtill inſenſible, and gave no ſigns of life, except by occaſional groans. She was borne upon a ſort of litter. Virginia, who was conſtantly by the ſide of it, was apprehenſive that, exhauſted by long abſtinence, and ſhaken by the ſudden change from bonds and darkneſs to liberty and light, her frame would never get the better of the ſhock. Lorenzo and Don Ramirez ſtill remained in the ſepulchre. After deliberating upon their proceedings, it was reſolved that, to prevent loſing time,

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the archers ſhould be divided into two bodies: that with one, Don Ramirez ſhould examine the cavern, while Lorenzo, with the other, might penetrate into the further vaults. This being arranged, and his followers being provided with torches, Don Ramirez advanced to the cavern. He had already deſcended ſome ſteps, when he heard people approaching haſtily from the interior part of the ſepulchre. This ſurpriſed him, and he quitted the cave precipitately.

"Do you hear foot-ſteps?" ſaid Lorenzo. "Let us bend our courſe towards them. 'Tis from this ſide that they ſeem to proceed."

At that moment a loud and piercing ſhriek induced him to quicken his ſteps.

"Help! help, for God's ſake!" cried a voice, whoſe melodious tone penetrated Lorenzo's heart with terror.

He flew towards the cry with the rapidity of lightning, and was followed by Ramirez with equal ſwiftneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Great Heaven! How frail thy creature man is made!
How by himſelf inſenſibly betrayed!
In our own ſtrength unhappily ſecure,
Too little cautious of the adverſe power,
On pleaſure's flowery brink we idly ſtray,
Maſters as yet of our returning way:
Till the ſtrong guſts of raging paſſion riſe,
Till the dire tempeſt mingles earth and ſkies,
And, ſwift into the boundleſs ocean borne,
Our fooliſh confidence too late we mourn.
Round our devoted heads the billows beat,
And from our troubled view the leſſening lands retreat.

PRIOR.

ALL this while Ambroſio was unconſcious of the dreadful ſcenes which were paſſing ſo near. The execution of his deſigns upon Antonia employed his every thought. Hitherto he was ſatisfied with the ſucceſs of his plans. Antonia had drank

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the opiate, was buried in the vaults of St. Clare, and abſolutely in his diſpoſal. Matilda, who was well acquainted with the nature and effects of the ſoporific medicine, had computed that it would not ceaſe to operate till one in the morning. For that hour he waited with impatience. The feſtival of St. Clare preſented him with a favourable opportunity of conſummating his crime. He was certain that the friars and nuns would be engaged in the proceſſion, and that he had no cauſe to dread an interruption: from appearing himſelf at the head of the monks, he had deſired to be excuſed. He doubted not, that being beyond the reach of help, cut off from all the world, and totally in his power, Antonia would comply with his deſires. The affection which ſhe had ever expreſſed for him, warranted this perſuaſion: but he reſolved, that ſhould ſhe prove obſtinate, no conſideration whatever ſhould prevent him from enjoying her. Secure from a diſcovery, he ſhuddered not at the idea of employing

ploying force; or, if he felt any repugnance, it aroſe not from a principle of ſhame or compaſſion, but from his feeling for Antonia the moſt ſincere and ardent affection, and wiſhing to owe her favours to no one but herſelf.

The monks quitted the abbey at midnight. Matilda was among the choriſters, and led the chaunt. Ambroſio was left by himſelf, and at liberty to purſue his own inclinations. Convinced that no one remained behind to watch his motions, or diſturb his pleaſures, he now haſtened to the weſtern aiſles. His heart beating with hope not unmingled with anxiety, he croſſed the garden, unlocked the door which admitted him into the cemetery, and in a few minutes he ſtood before the vaults. Here he pauſed: he looked round him with ſuſpicion, conſcious that his buſineſs was unfit for any other eye. As he ſtood in heſitation, he heard the melancholy ſhriek of the ſcreech-owl: the wind rattled loudly againſt the windows of the adjacent convent, and,

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as the current ſwept by him, bore with it the faint notes of the chaunt of choriſters. He opened the door cautiouſly, as if fearing to be overheard; he entered, and cloſed it again after him. Guided by his lamp, he threaded the long paſſages, in whoſe windings Matilda had inſtructed him, and reached the private vault which contained his ſleeping miſtreſs.

Its entrance was by no means eaſy to diſcover; but this was no obſtacle to Ambroſio, who at the time of Antonia's funeral had obſerved it too carefully to be deceived. He found the door, which was unfaſtened, puſhed it open, and deſcended into the dungeon. He approached the humble tomb in which Antonia repoſed. He had provided himſelf with an iron crow and a pick-axe: but this precaution was unneceſſary. The grate was ſlightly faſtened on the outſide: he raiſed it, and, placing the lamp upon its ridge, bent ſilently over the tomb. By the ſide of three putrid half-corrupted bodies lay the ſleeping beauty.

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A lively red, the forerunner of returning animation, had already ſpread itſelf over her cheeks; and as wrapped in her ſhroud ſhe reclined upon her funeral bier, ſhe ſeemed to ſmile at the images of death around her. While he gazed upon their rotting bones and diſguſting figures, who perhaps were once as ſweet and lovely, Ambroſio thought upon Elvira, by him reduced to the ſame ſtate. As the memory of that horrid act glanced upon his mind, it was clouded with a gloomy horror; yet it ſerved but to ſtrengthen his reſolution to deſtroy Antonia's honour.

"For your ſake, fatal beauty!" murmured the monk, while gazing on his devoted prey, "for your ſake have I committed this murder, and ſold myſelf to eternal tortures. Now you are in my power: the produce of my guilt will at leaſt be mine. Hope not that your prayers breathed in tones of unequalled melody, your bright eyes filled with tears, and your hands lifted in ſupplication, as when ſeeking in penitence

penitence the Virgin's pardon: hope not, that your moving innocence, your beauteous grief, or all your ſuppliant arts, ſhall ranſom you from my embraces. Before the break of day, mine you muſt, and mine you ſhall be!"

He lifted her, ſtill motionleſs, from the tomb: he ſeated himſelf upon a bank of ſtone, and, ſupporting her in his arms, watched impatiently for the ſymptoms of returning animation. Scarcely could he command his paſſion ſufficiently, to reſtrain himſelf from enjoying her while yet inſenſible. His natural luſt was increaſed in ardour by the difficulties which had oppoſed his ſatisfying it; as alſo by his long abſtinence from woman, ſince, from the moment of reſigning her claim to his love, Matilda had exiled him from her arms for ever.

"I am no proſtitute, Ambroſio," had ſhe told him, when, in the fulneſs of his luſt, he demanded her favours with more than uſual earneſtneſs; "I am now no more than your friend, and will not be your miſtreſs.

treſs. Ceaſe then to ſolicit my complying with deſires which inſult me. While your heart was mine, I gloried in your embraces. Thoſe happy times are paſt; my perſon is become indifferent to you, and 'tis neceſſity, not love, which makes you ſeek my enjoyment. I cannot yield to a requeſt ſo humiliating to my pride."

Suddenly deprived of pleaſures, the uſe of which had made them an abſolute want, the monk felt this reſtraint ſeverely. Naturally addicted to the gratification of the ſenſes, in the full vigour of manhood and heat of blood, he had ſuffered his temperament to acquire ſuch aſcendency, that his luſt was become madneſs. Of his fondneſs for Antonia, none but the groſſer particles remained; he longed for the poſſeſſion of her perſon; and even the gloom of the vault, the ſurrounding ſilence, and the reſiſtance which he expected from her, ſeemed to give a freſh edge to his fierce and unbridled deſires.

Gradually he felt the boſom which reſted againſt

againſt his glow with returning warmth. Her heart throbbed again, her blood flowed ſwifter, and her lips moved. At length ſhe opened her eyes; but, ſtill oppreſſed and bewildered by the effects of the ſtrong opiate, ſhe cloſed them again immediately. Ambroſio watched her narrowly, nor permitted a movement to eſcape him. Perceiving that ſhe was fully reſtored to exiſtence, he caught her in rapture to his boſom, and cloſely preſſed his lips to hers. The ſuddenneſs of his action ſufficed to diſſipate the fumes which obſcured Antonia's reaſon. She haſtily raiſed herſelf, and caſt a wild look round her. The ſtrange images which preſented themſelves on every ſide contributed to confuſe her. She put her hand to her head, as if to ſettle her diſordered imagination. At length ſhe took it away, and threw her eyes through the dungeon a ſecond time. They fixed on the abbot's face.

"Where am I?" ſhe ſaid abruptly. "How came I here?—Where is my mo-

ther? Methought I saw her! Oh! a dream, a dreadful dreadful dream told me ..... But where am I? Let me go! I cannot stay here!"

She attempted to rise, but the monk prevented her.

"Be calm, lovely Antonia!" he replied; "no danger is near you: confide in my protection. Why do you gaze on me so earnestly? Do you not know me? Not know your friend, Ambrosio?"

"Ambrosio? my friend?—Oh! yes, yes; I remember ..... But why am I here? Who has brought me? Why are you with me?—Oh! Flora bade me beware .....! —Here are nothing but graves, and tombs, and skeletons! This place frightens me! Good Ambrosio, take me away from it, for it recalls my fearful dream!—Methought I was dead, and laid in my grave!—Good Ambrosio, take me from hence!—Will you not? Oh! will you not?—Do not look on me thus!—Your flaming eyes terrify me!

me!—Spare me, father! Oh! ſpare me for God's ſake!"

"Why theſe terrors, Antonia?" rejoined the abbot, folding her in his arms, and covering her boſom with kiſſes which ſhe in vain ſtruggled to avoid. "What fear you from me, from one who adores you? What matters it where you are? This ſepulchre ſeems to me Love's bower. This gloom is the friendly night of Myſtery, which he ſpreads over our delights! Such do I think it, and ſuch muſt my Antonia. Yes, my ſweet girl! yes! Your veins ſhall glow with the fire which circles in mine, and my tranſports ſhall be doubled by your ſharing them!"

While he ſpoke thus, he repeated his embraces, and permitted himſelf the moſt indecent liberties. Even Antonia's ignorance was not proof againſt the freedom of his behaviour. She was ſenſible of her danger, forced herſelf from his arms, and her ſhroud being her only garment, ſhe wrapped it cloſely round her.

"Unhand me, father!" ſhe cried, her honeſt indignation tempered by alarm at her unprotected poſition: "Why have you brought me to this place? Its appearance freezes me with horror! Convey me from hence, if you have the leaſt ſenſe of pity and humanity! Let me return to the houſe, which I have quitted I know not how; but ſtay here one moment longer, I neither will nor ought."

Though the monk was ſomewhat ſtartled by the reſolute tone in which this ſpeech was delivered, it produced upon him no other effect than ſurpriſe. He caught her hand, forced her upon his knee, and, gazing upon her with gloting eyes, he thus replied to her:

"Compoſe yourſelf, Antonia. Reſiſtance is unavailing, and I need diſavow my paſſion for you no longer. You are imagined dead; ſociety is for ever loſt to you. I poſſeſs you here alone; you are abſolutely in my power, and I burn with deſires which I muſt either gratify or die: but I would

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owe my happineſs to yourſelf. My lovely girl! my adorable Antonia! let me inſtruct you in joys to which you are ſtill a ſtranger, and teach you to feel thoſe pleaſures in my arms, which I muſt ſoon enjoy in yours. Nay, this ſtruggling is childiſh," he continued, ſeeing her repel his careſſes, and endeavour to eſcape from his graſp; "no aid is near; neither heaven nor earth ſhall ſave you from my embraces. Yet why reject pleaſures ſo ſweet, ſo rapturous? No one obſerves us; our commerce will be a ſecret to all the world. Love and opportunity invite your giving looſe to your paſſions. Yield to them, my Antonia! yield to them, my lovely girl! Throw your arms thus fondly round me; join your lips thus cloſely to mine! Amidſt all her gifts, has Nature denied her moſt precious, the ſenſibility of pleaſure? Oh! impoſſible! Every feature, look, and motion declares you formed to bleſs, and to be bleſſed yourſelf! Turn not on me thoſe ſupplicating eyes: conſult your own charms; they will tell you that I

am proof againſt entreaty. Can I relinquiſh theſe limbs ſo white, ſo ſoft, ſo delicate! theſe ſwelling breaſts, round, full, and elaſtic! theſe lips fraught with ſuch inexhauſtible ſweetneſs? Can I relinquiſh theſe treaſures, and leave them to another's enjoyment? No, Antonia; never, never! I ſwear it by this kiſs! and this! and this!"

With every moment the friar's paſſion became more ardent, and Antonia's terror more intenſe. She ſtruggled to diſengage herſelf from his arms. Her exertions were unſucceſsful; and, finding that Ambroſio's conduct became ſtill freer, ſhe ſhrieked for aſſiſtance with all her ſtrength. The aſpect of the vault, the pale glimmering of the lamp, the ſurrounding obſcurity, the ſight of the tomb, and the objects of mortality which met her eyes on either ſide, were ill calculated to inſpire her with thoſe emotions by which the friar was agitated. Even his careſſes terrified her from their fury, and created no other ſentiment than fear.

fear. On the contrary, her alarm, her evident diſguſt, and inceſſant oppoſition, ſeemed only to inflame the monk's deſires, and ſupply his brutality with additional ſtrength. Antonia's ſhrieks were unheard; yet ſhe continued them, nor abandoned her endeavours to eſcape, till exhauſted and out of breath ſhe ſank from his arms upon her knees, and once more had recourſe to prayers and ſupplications. This attempt had no better ſucceſs than the former. On the contrary, taking advantage of her ſituation, the raviſher threw himſelf by her ſide. He claſped her to his boſom almoſt lifeleſs with terror, and faint with ſtruggling. He ſtifled her cries with kiſſes, treated her with the rudeneſs of an unprincipled barbarian, proceeded from freedom to freedom, and, in the violence of his luſtful delirium, wounded and bruiſed her tender limbs. Heedleſs of her tears, cries and entreaties, he gradually made himſelf maſter of her perſon, and deſiſted not from his prey, till

he had accompliſhed his crime and the diſ-honour of Antonia.

Scarcely had he ſucceeded in his deſign, than he ſhuddered at himſelf, and the means by which it was effected. The very exceſs of his former eagerneſs to poſſeſs Antonia now contributed to inſpire him with diſguſt; and a ſecret impulſe made him feel how baſe and unmanly was the crime which he had juſt committed. He ſtarted haſtily from her arms. She, who ſo lately had been the object of his adoration, now raiſed no other ſentiment in his heart than averſion and rage. He turned away from her; or, if his eyes reſted upon her figure involuntarily, it was only to dart upon her looks of hate. The unfortunate had fainted ere the completion of her diſgrace: ſhe only recovered life to be ſenſible of her misfortune. She remained ſtretched upon the earth in ſilent deſpair; the tears chaſed each other ſlowly down her cheeks, and her boſom heaved with frequent ſobs. Oppreſſed with

grief,

grief, ſhe continued for ſome time in this ſtate of torpidity. At length ſhe roſe with difficulty, and, dragging her feeble ſteps towards the door, prepared to quit the dungeon.

The ſound of her foot-ſteps rouſed the monk from his ſullen apathy. Starting from the tomb againſt which he reclined, while his eyes wandered over the images of corruption contained in it, he purſued the victim of his brutality, and ſoon overtook her. He ſeized her by the arm, and violently forced her back into the dungeon.

"Whither go you?" he cried in a ſtern voice; "return this inſtant!"

Antonia trembled at the fury of his countenance.

"What would you more?" ſhe ſaid with timidity: "Is not my ruin completed? Am I not undone, undone for ever? Is not your cruelty contented, or have I yet more to ſuffer? Let me depart; let me return to

my home, and weep unreſtrained my ſhame and my affliction!"

"Return to your home?" repeated the monk, with bitter and contemptuous mockery; then ſuddenly his eyes flaming with paſſion, "What? That you may denounce me to the world? that you may proclaim me a hypocrite, a raviſher, a betrayer, a monſter of cruelty, luſt, and ingratitude? No, no, no! I know well the whole weight of my offences; well, that your complaints would be too juſt, and my crimes too notorious! You ſhall not from hence to tell Madrid that I am a villain; that my conſcience is loaded with ſins, which make me deſpair of Heaven's pardon. Wretched girl, you muſt ſtay here with me! Here amidſt theſe lonely tombs, theſe images of death, theſe rotting, loathſome, corrupted bodies! here ſhall you ſtay, and witneſs my ſufferings; witneſs what it is to feel the horrors of deſpondency, and breathe the laſt groan in blaſphemy and curſes!—

And

And whom am I to thank for this? What ſeduced me into crimes, whoſe bare remembrance makes me ſhudder? Fatal witch! was it not thy beauty? Have you not plunged my ſoul in ſhame? Have you not made me a perjured hypocrite, a raviſher, an aſſaſſin? Nay, at this moment, does not that angel look bid me deſpair of God's forgiveneſs? Oh! when I ſtand before his judgment-throne, that look will ſuffice to damn me! You will tell my judge, that you were happy, till *I* ſaw you; that you were innocent, till *I* polluted you! You will come with thoſe tearful eyes, thoſe cheeks pale and ghaſtly, thoſe hands lifted in ſupplication, as when you ſought from me that mercy which I gave not! Then will my perdition be certain! Then will come your mother's ghoſt, and hurl me down into the dwellings of fiends, and flames, and furies, and everlaſting torments! And 'tis you who will accuſe me! 'tis you who will cauſe my eternal anguiſh!—you, wretched girl! you! you!"

As he thundered out theſe words, he violently graſped Antonia's arm, and ſpurned the earth with delirious fury.

Suppoſing his brain to be turned, Antonia ſank in terror upon her knees; ſhe lifted up her hands, and her voice almoſt died away ere ſhe could give it utterance.

"Spare me! ſpare me!" ſhe murmured with difficulty.

"Silence!" cried the friar madly, and daſhed her upon the ground——

He quitted her, and paced the dungeon with a wild and diſordered air. His eyes rolled fearfully; Antonia trembled whenever ſhe met their gaze. He ſeemed to meditate on ſomething horrible, and ſhe gave up all hopes of eſcaping from the ſepulchre with life. Yet in harbouring this idea ſhe did him injuſtice. Amidſt the horror and diſguſt to which his ſoul was a prey, pity for his victim ſtill held a place in it. The ſtorm of paſſion once over, he would have given worlds, had he poſſeſſed them, to have reſtored to her that innocence of which his unbridled

unbridled luſt had deprived her. Of the deſires which had urged him to the crime, no trace was left in his boſom. The wealth of India would not have tempted him to a ſecond enjoyment of her perſon. His nature ſeemed to revolt at the very idea, and fain would he have wiped from his memory the ſcene which had juſt paſſed. As his gloomy rage abated, in proportion did his compaſſion augment for Antonia. He ſtopped, and would have ſpoken to her words of comfort; but he knew not from whence to draw them, and remained gazing upon her with mournful wildneſs. Her ſituation ſeemed ſo hopeleſs, ſo woe-begone, as to baffle mortal power to relieve her. What could he do for her? Her peace of mind was loſt, her honour irreparably ruined. She was cut off for ever from ſociety, nor dared he give her back to it. He was conſcious that, were ſhe to appear in the world again, his guilt would be revealed, and his puniſhment inevitable. To one ſo laden with crimes, death came armed

with

with double terrors. Yet, ſhould he reſtore Antonia to light, and ſtand the chance of her betraying him, how miſerable a proſpect would preſent itſelf before her! She could never hope to be creditably eſtabliſhed; ſhe would be marked with infamy, and condemned to ſorrow and ſolitude for the remainder of her exiſtence. What was the alternative? A reſolution far more terrible for Antonia, but which at leaſt would inſure the abbot's ſafety. He determined to leave the world perſuaded of her death, and to retain her a captive in this gloomy priſon. There he propoſed to viſit her every night, to bring her food, to profeſs his penitence, and mingle his tears with hers. The monk felt that this reſolution was unjuſt and cruel; but it was his only means to prevent Antonia from publiſhing his guilt and her own infamy. Should he releaſe her, he could not depend upon her ſilence. His offence was too flagrant to permit his hoping for her forgiveneſs. Beſides, her re-appearing would excite uni-

verſal

verſal curioſity, and the violence of her affliction would prevent her from concealing its cauſe. He determined, therefore, that Antonia ſhould remain a priſoner in the dungeon.

He approached her with confuſion painted on his countenance. He raiſed her from the ground—her hand trembled as he took it, and he dropped it again as if he had touched a ſerpent. Nature ſeemed to recoil at the touch. He felt himſelf at once repulſed from and attracted towards her, yet could account for neither ſentiment. There was ſomething in her look which penetrated him with horror; and though his underſtanding was ſtill ignorant of it, conſcience pointed out to him the whole extent of his crime. In hurried accents, yet the gentleſt he could find, while his eye was averted, and his voice ſcarcely audible, he ſtrove to conſole her under a misfortune which now could not be avoided. He declared himſelf ſincerely penitent, and that he would gladly ſhed a drop of his blood

for

for every tear which his barbarity had forced from her. Wretched and hopeleſs, Antonia liſtened to him in ſilent grief; but when he announced her confinement in the ſepulchre, that dreadful doom, to which even death ſeemed preferable, rouſed her from her inſenſibility at once. To linger out a life of miſery in a narrow loathſome cell, known to exiſt by no human being ſave her raviſher, ſurrounded by mouldering corſes, breathing the peſtilential air of corruption, never more to behold the light, or drink the pure gale of heaven—the idea was more terrible than ſhe could ſupport. It conquered even her abhorrence of the friar. Again ſhe ſank upon her knees; ſhe beſought his compaſſion in terms the moſt pathetic and urgent: ſhe promiſed, would he but reſtore her to liberty, to conceal her injuries from the world; to aſſign any reaſons for her re-appearance, which he might judge proper; and in order to prevent the leaſt ſuſpicion from falling upon him, ſhe offered to quit Madrid immediately. Her

entreaties

entreaties were ſo urgent as to make a conſiderable impreſſion upon the monk. He reflected, that as her perſon no longer excited his deſires, he had no intereſt in keeping her concealed as he had at firſt intended; that he was adding a freſh injury to thoſe which ſhe had already ſuffered; and that if ſhe adhered to her promiſes, whether ſhe was confined or at liberty, his life and reputation were equally ſecure. On the other hand, he trembled leſt in her affliction Antonia ſhould unintentionally break her engagement, or that her exceſſive ſimplicity and ignorance of deceit ſhould permit ſome one more artful to ſurpriſe her ſecret.—However well-founded were theſe apprehenſions, compaſſion, and a ſincere wiſh to repair his fault as much as poſſible, ſolicited his complying with the prayers of his ſuppliant. The difficulty of colouring Antonia's unexpected return to life, after her ſuppoſed death and public interment, was the only point which kept him irreſolute. He was ſtill pondering on the means of removing

moving this obſtacle, when he heard the ſound of feet approaching with precipitation. The door of the vault was thrown open, and Matilda ruſhed in, evidently much confuſed and terrified.

On ſeeing a ſtranger enter, Antonia uttered a cry of joy; but her hopes of receiving ſuccour from him were ſoon diſſipated. The ſuppoſed novice, without expreſſing the leaſt ſurpriſe at finding a woman alone with the monk, in ſo ſtrange a place, and at ſo late an hour, addreſſed him thus without loſing a moment:

"What is to be done, Ambroſio? We are loſt, unleſs ſome ſpeedy means is found of diſpelling the rioters. Ambroſio, the convent of St. Clare is on fire; the prioreſs is fallen a victim to the fury of the mob. Already is the abbey menaced with a ſimilar fate. Alarmed at the threats of the people, the monks ſeek for you every where. They imagine that your authority alone will ſuffice to calm this diſturbance. No one knows what is become of you, and your abſence

abſence creates univerſal aſtoniſhment and deſpair. I profited by the confuſion, and fled hither to warn you of the danger."

"This will ſoon be remedied," anſwered the abbot; "I will haſten back to my cell: a trivial reaſon will account for my having been miſſed."

"Impoſſible!" rejoined Matilda: "The ſepulchre is filled with archers. Lorenzo de Medina, with ſeveral officers of the Inquiſition, ſearches through the vaults, and pervades every paſſage. You will be intercepted in your flight; your reaſons for being at this late hour in the ſepulchre will be examined; Antonia will be found, and then you are undone for ever!"

"Lorenzo de Medina? Officers of the Inquiſition? What brings them here? Seek they for me? Am I then ſuſpected? Oh! ſpeak, Matilda! anſwer me in pity!"

"As yet they do not think of you; but I fear that they will ere long. Your only chance of eſcaping their notice reſts upon the difficulty of exploring this vault. The door

door is artfully hidden; haply it may not be obſerved, and we may remain concealed till the ſearch is over."

"But Antonia..... Should the inquiſitors draw near, and her cries be heard..."

"Thus I remove that danger!" interrupted Matilda.

At the ſame time drawing a poniard, ſhe ruſhed upon her devoted prey.

"Hold! hold!" cried Ambroſio, ſeizing her hand, and wreſting from it the already lifted weapon. "What would you do, cruel woman? The unfortunate has already ſuffered but too much, thanks to your pernicious counſels! Would to God that I had never followed them! Would to God that I had never ſeen your face!"

Matilda darted upon him a look of ſcorn.

"Abſurd!" ſhe exclaimed with an air of paſſion and majeſty, which impreſſed the monk with awe. "After robbing her of all that made it dear, can you fear to deprive her of a life ſo miſerable? But 'tis well!

well! Let her live to convince you of your folly. I abandon you to your evil deſtiny! I diſclaim your alliance! Who trembles to commit ſo inſignificant a crime, deſerves not my protection. Hark! hark! Ambroſio; hear you not the archers? They come, and your deſtruction is inevitable!"

At this moment the abbot heard the ſound of diſtant voices. He flew to cloſe the door, on whoſe concealment his ſafety depended, and which Matilda had neglected to faſten. Ere he could reach it, he ſaw Antonia glide ſuddenly by him, ruſh through the door, and fly towards the noiſe with the ſwiftneſs of an arrow. She had liſtened attentively to Matilda: ſhe heard Lorenzo's name mentioned, and reſolved to riſque every thing to throw herſelf under his protection. The door was open. The ſounds convinced her that the archers could be at no great diſtance. She muſtered up her little remaining ſtrength, ruſhed by the monk ere he perceived her deſign, and bent her courſe rapidly towards the voices. As

ſoon

ſoon as he recovered from his firſt ſurpriſe, the abbot failed not to purſue her. In vain did Antonia redouble her ſpeed, and ſtretch every nerve to the utmoſt. Her enemy gained upon her every moment: ſhe heard his ſteps cloſe after her, and felt the heat of his breath glow upon her neck. He overtook her; he twiſted his hand in the ringlets of her ſtreaming hair, and attempted to drag her back with him to the dungeon. Antonia reſiſted with all her ſtrength. She folded her arms round a pillar which ſupported the roof, and ſhrieked loudly for aſſiſtance. In vain did the monk ſtrive to threaten her to ſilence.

"Help!" ſhe continued to exclaim; "help! help! for God's ſake!"

Quickened by her cries, the ſound of foot-ſteps was heard approaching. The abbot expected every moment to ſee the inquiſitors arrive. Antonia ſtill reſiſted, and he now enforced her ſilence by means the moſt horrible and inhuman. He ſtill graſped Matilda's dagger: without al-

lowing himſelf a moment's reflection, he raiſed it, and plunged it twice in the boſom of Antonia. She ſhrieked, and ſank upon the ground. The monk endeavoured to bear her away with him, but ſhe ſtill embraced the pillar firmly. At that inſtant the light of approaching torches flaſhed upon the walls. Dreading a diſcovery, Ambroſio was compelled to abandon his victim, and haſtily fled back to the vault, where he had left Matilda.

He fled not unobſerved. Don Ramirez happening to arrive the firſt, perceived a female bleeding upon the ground, and a man flying from the ſpot, whoſe confuſion betrayed him for the murderer. He inſtantly purſued the fugitive, with ſome part of the archers, while the others remained with Lorenzo to protect the wounded ſtranger. They raiſed her, and ſupported her in their arms. She had fainted from exceſs of pain, but ſoon gave ſigns of returning life. She opened her eyes; and on lifting up her head, the quantity of fair hair

fell

fell back, which till then had obſcured her features.

"God Almighty! it is Antonia!"

Such was Lorenzo's exclamation, while he ſnatched her from the attendant's arms, and claſped her in his own.

Though aimed by an uncertain hand, the poniard had anſwered but too well the purpoſe of its employer. The wounds were mortal, and Antonia was conſcious that ſhe never could recover. Yet the few moments which remained for her, were moments of happineſs. The concern expreſſed upon Lorenzo's countenance, the frantic fondneſs of his complaints, and his earneſt enquiries reſpecting her wounds, convinced her beyond a doubt that his affections were her own. She would not be removed from the vaults, fearing leſt motion ſhould only haſten her death; and ſhe was unwilling to loſe thoſe moments which ſhe paſſed in receiving proofs of Lorenzo's love, and aſſuring him of her own. She told him, that had ſhe ſtill been undefiled ſhe might

might have lamented the loſs of life; but that, deprived of honour and branded with ſhame, death was to her a bleſſing: ſhe could not have been his wife; and that hope being denied her, ſhe reſigned herſelf to the grave without one ſigh of regret. She bade him take courage, conjured him not to abandon himſelf to fruitleſs ſorrow, and declared that ſhe mourned to leave nothing in the whole world but him. While every ſweet accent increaſed rather than lightened Lorenzo's grief, ſhe continued to converſe with him till the moment of diſſolution. Her voice grew faint, and ſcarcely audible; a thick cloud ſpread itſelf over her eyes; her heart beat ſlow and irregular, and every inſtant ſeemed to announce that her fate was near at hand.

She lay, her head reclining upon Lorenzo's boſom, and her lips ſtill murmuring to him words of comfort. She was interrupted by the convent-bell, as, tolling at a diſtance, it ſtruck the hour. Suddenly Antonia's eyes ſparkled with celeſtial bright-

neſs; her frame ſeemed to have received new ſtrength and animation. She ſtarted from her lover's arms.

"Three o'clock!" ſhe cried. "Mother, I come!"

She claſped her hands, and ſank lifeleſs upon the ground. Lorenzo, in agony, threw himſelf beſide her. He tore his hair, beat his breaſt, and refuſed to be ſeparated from the corſe. At length his force being exhauſted, he ſuffered himſelf to be led from the vault, and was conveyed to the palace de Medina ſcarcely more alive than the unfortunate Antonia.

In the mean while, though cloſely purſued, Ambroſio ſucceeded in regaining the vault. The door was already faſtened when Don Ramirez arrived, and much time elapſed ere the fugitive's retreat was diſcovered. But nothing can reſiſt perſeverance. Though ſo artfully concealed, the door could not eſcape the vigilance of the archers. They forced it open, and entered the vault to the infinite diſmay of

Ambroſio and his companion. The monk's confuſion, his attempt to hide himſelf, his rapid flight, and the blood ſprinkled upon his clothes, left no room to doubt his being Antonia's murderer. But when he was recognized for the immaculate Ambroſio, "the man of holineſs," the idol of Madrid; the faculties of the ſpectators were chained up in ſurpriſe, and ſcarcely could they perſuade themſelves that what they ſaw was no viſion. The abbot ſtrove not to vindicate himſelf, but preſerved a ſullen ſilence. He was ſecured and bound. The ſame precaution was taken with Matilda. Her cowl being removed, the delicacy of her features and profuſion of her golden hair betrayed her ſex; and this incident created freſh amazement. The dagger was alſo found in the tomb, where the monk had thrown it; and the dungeon having undergone a thorough ſearch, the two culprits were conveyed to the priſons of the Inquiſition.

Don Ramirez took care that the populace ſhould remain ignorant both of the

crimes and profeſſion of the captives. He feared a repetition of the riots, which had followed the apprehending the prioreſs of St. Clare. He contented himſelf with ſtating to the Capuchins the guilt of their ſuperior. To avoid the ſhame of a public accuſation, and dreading the popular fury, from which they had already ſaved their abbey with much difficulty, the monks readily permitted the inquiſitors to ſearch their manſion without noiſe. No freſh diſcoveries were made. The effects found in the abbot's and Matilda's cells were ſeized, and carried to the Inquiſition to be produced in evidence. Every thing elſe remained in its former poſition, and order and tranquillity once more prevailed through Madrid.

St. Clare's convent was completely ruined by the united ravages of the mob and conflagration. Nothing remained of it but the principal walls, whoſe thickneſs and ſolidity had preſerved them from the flames. The nuns who had belonged to it were obliged, in conſequence, to diſperſe themſelves

ſelves into other ſocieties: but the prejudice againſt them ran high, and the ſuperiors were very unwilling to admit them. However, moſt of them being related to families the moſt diſtinguiſhed for their riches, birth, and power, the ſeveral convents were compelled to receive them, though they did it with a very ill grace. This prejudice was extremely falſe and unjuſtifiable. After a cloſe inveſtigation, it was proved that all in the convent were perſuaded of the death of Agnes, except the four nuns whom St. Urſula had pointed out. Theſe had fallen victims to the popular fury, as had alſo ſeveral who were perfectly innocent and unconſcious of the whole affair. Blinded by reſentment, the mob had ſacrificed every nun who fell into their hands: they who eſcaped were entirely indebted to the duke de Medina's prudence and moderation. Of this they were conſcious, and felt for that nobleman a proper ſenſe of gratitude.

Virginia was not the moſt ſparing of her

thanks; ſhe wiſhed equally to make a pro per return for his attentions, and to obtain the good graces of Lorenzo's uncle. In this ſhe eaſily ſucceeded. The duke be held her beauty with wonder and admi ration; and while his eyes were enchante with her form, the ſweetneſs of her manners and her tender concern for the ſuffering nun, prepoſſeſſed his heart in her favour This Virginia had diſcernment enough t perceive, and ſhe redoubled her attentio to the invalid. When he parted from he at the door of her father's palace, the duk entreated permiſſion to enquire occaſionall after her health. His requeſt was readil granted; Virginia aſſured him, that th marquis de Villa-Franca would be proud o an opportunity to thank him in perſon fo the protection afforded to her. They now ſeparated; he enchanted with her beauty and gentleneſs, and ſhe much pleaſed with him, and more with his nephew.

On entering the palace, Virginia's firſt care was to ſummon the family phyſician, and

and take care of her unknown charge. Her mother haſtened to ſhare with her the charitable office. Alarmed by the riots, and trembling for his daughter's ſafety, who was his only child, the marquis had flown to St. Clare's convent, and was ſtill employed in ſeeking her. Meſſengers were now diſpatched on all ſides to inform him, that he would find her ſafe at his hotel, and deſire him to haſten thither immediately. His abſence gave Virginia liberty to beſtow her whole attention upon her patient; and though much diſordered herſelf by the adventures of the night, no perſuaſion could induce her to quit the bed-ſide of the ſufferer. Her conſtitution being much enfeebled by want and ſorrow, it was ſome time before the ſtranger was reſtored to her ſenſes. She found great difficulty in ſwallowing the medicines preſcribed to her; but this obſtacle being removed, ſhe eaſily conquered her diſeaſe, which proceeded from nothing but weakneſs. The attention which was paid her, the wholeſome food

to which ſhe had been long a ſtranger, and her joy at being reſtored to liberty, to ſociety, and, as ſhe dared to hope, to love, all this combined to her ſpeedy re-eſtabliſhment. From the firſt moment of knowing her, her melancholy ſituation, her ſufferings almoſt unparalleled, had engaged the affections of her amiable hoſteſs. Virginia felt for her the moſt lively intereſt: but how was ſhe delighted, when, her gueſt being ſufficiently recovered to relate her hiſtory, ſhe recognized in the captive nun the ſiſter of Lorenzo!

This victim of monaſtic cruelty was indeed no other than the unfortunate Agnes. During her abode in the convent, ſhe had been well known to Virginia; but her emaciated form, her features altered by affliction, her death univerſally credited, and her overgrown and matted hair which hung over her face and boſom in diſorder, at firſt had prevented her being recollected. The prioreſs had put every artifice in practice to induce Virginia to take the veil; for the

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heireſs of Villa-Franca would have been no deſpicable acquiſition. Her ſeeming kindneſs and unremitted attention ſo far ſucceeded, that her young relation began to think ſeriouſly upon compliance. Better inſtructed in the diſguſt and ennui of a monaſtic life, Agnes had penetrated the deſigns of the domina. She trembled for the innocent girl, and endeavoured to make her ſenſible of her error. She painted in their true colours the numerous inconveniencies attached to a convent, the continued reſtraint, the low jealouſies, the petty intrigues, the ſervile court, and groſs flattery expected by the ſuperior. She then bade Virginia reflect on the brilliant proſpect which preſented itſelf before her. The idol of her parents, the admiration of Madrid, endowed by nature and education with every perfection of perſon and mind, ſhe might look forward to an eſtabliſhment the moſt fortunate. Her riches furniſhed her with the means of exerciſing, in their fulleſt extent, charity and benevolence,

thoſe virtues ſo dear to her; and her ſtay in the world would enable her diſcovering objects worthy her protection, which could not be done in the ſecluſion of a convent.

Her perſuaſions induced Virginia to lay aſide all thoughts of the veil: but another argument, not uſed by Agnes, had more weight with her than all the others put together. She had ſeen Lorenzo when he viſited his ſiſter at the grate; his perſon pleaſed her, and her converſations with Agnes generally uſed to terminate in ſome queſtion about her brother. She, who doted upon Lorenzo, wiſhed for no better than an oportunity to trumpet out his praiſe. She ſpoke of him in terms of rapture; and, to convince her auditor how juſt were his ſentiments, how cultivated his mind, and elegant his expreſſions, ſhe ſhewed her at different times the letters which ſhe received from him. She ſoon perceived that from theſe communications the heart of her young friend had imbibed impreſſions which ſhe was far from intend-

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ing to give, but was truly happy to diſcover. She could not have wiſhed her brother a more deſirable union: heireſs of Villa-Franca, virtuous, affectionate, beautiful, and accompliſhed, Virginia ſeemed calculated to make him happy. She ſounded her brother upon the ſubject, though without mentioning names or circumſtances. He aſſured her in his anſwers, that his heart and hand were totally diſengaged, and ſhe thought that upon theſe grounds ſhe might proceed without danger. She in conſequence endeavoured to ſtrengthen the dawning paſſion of her friend. Lorenzo was made the conſtant topic of her diſcourſe; and the avidity with which her auditor liſtened, the ſighs which frequently eſcaped from her boſom, and the eagerneſs with which upon any digreſſion ſhe brought back the converſation to the ſubject whence it had wandered, ſufficed to convince Agnes that her brother's addreſſes would be far from diſagreeable. She at length ven-

tured to mention her wiſhes to the duke. Though a ſtranger to the lady herſelf, he knew enough of her ſituation to think her worthy his nephew's hand. It was agreed between him and his niece, that ſhe ſhould inſinuate the idea to Lorenzo, and ſhe only waited his return to Madrid to propoſe her friend to him as his bride. The unfortunate events which took place in the interim, prevented her from executing her deſign. Virginia wept her loſs ſincerely, both as a companion, and as the only perſon to whom ſhe could ſpeak of Lorenzo. Her paſſion continued to prey upon her heart in ſecret, and ſhe had almoſt determined to confeſs her ſentiments to her mother, when accident once more threw their object in her way. The ſight of him ſo near her, his politeneſs, his compaſſion, his intrepidity, had combined to give new ardour to her affection. When ſhe now found her friend and advocate reſtored to her, ſhe looked upon her as a gift from Heaven; ſhe ventured to che-

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riſh the hope of being united to Lorenzo, and reſolved to uſe with him his ſiſter's influence.

Suppoſing that before her death Agnes might poſſibly have made the propoſal, the duke had placed all his nephew's hints of marriage to Virginia's account; conſequently he gave them the moſt favourable reception. On returning to his hotel, the relation given him of Antonia's death, and Lorenzo's behaviour on the occaſion, made evident his miſtake. He lamented the circumſtances; but the unhappy girl being effectually out of the way, he truſted that his deſigns would yet be executed. 'Tis true that Lorenzo's ſituation juſt then ill ſuited him for a bridegroom. His hopes diſappointed at the moment when he expected to realize them, and the dreadful and ſudden death of his miſtreſs, had affected him very ſeverely. The duke found him upon the bed of ſickneſs. His attendants expreſſed ſerious apprehenſions for his life; but the uncle entertained not the

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ſame fears. He was of opinion, and not unwiſely, that "men have died, and worms have ate them, but not for love!" He therefore flattered himſelf, that however deep might be the impreſſion made upon his nephew's heart, time and Virginia would be able to efface it. He now haſtened to the afflicted youth, and endeavoured to conſole him: he ſympathiſed in his diſtreſs, but encouraged him to reſiſt the encroachments of deſpair. He allowed, that he could not but feel ſhocked at an event ſo terrible, nor could he blame his ſenſibility; but he beſought him not to torment himſelf with vain regrets, and rather to ſtruggle with affliction, and preſerve his life, if not for his own ſake, at leaſt for the ſake of thoſe who were fondly attached to him. While he laboured thus to make Lorenzo forget Antonia's loſs, the duke paid his court aſſiduouſly to Virginia, and ſeized every opportunity to advance his nephew's intereſt in her heart.

It may eaſily be expected that Agnes

was

was not long without enquiring after Don Raymond. She was ſhocked to hear the wretched ſituation to which grief had reduced him; yet ſhe could not help exulting ſecretly, when ſhe reflected that his illneſs proved the ſincerity of his love. The duke undertook the office himſelf, of announcing to the invalid the happineſs which awaited him. Though he omitted no precaution to prepare him for ſuch an event, at this ſudden change from deſpair to happineſs, Raymond's tranſports were ſo violent, as nearly to have proved fatal to him. Theſe once paſſed, the tranquillity of his mind, the aſſurance of felicity, and above all, the preſence of Agnes (who was no ſooner re-eſtabliſhed by the care of Virginia and the marchioneſs, than ſhe haſtened to attend her lover), ſoon enabled him to overcome the effects of his late dreadful malady. The calm of his ſoul communicated itſelf to his body, and he recovered with ſuch rapidity as to create univerſal ſurpriſe.

Not

Not ſo Lorenzo. Antonia's death, accompanied with ſuch terrible circumſtances, weighed upon his mind heavily. He was worn down to a ſhadow; nothing could give him pleaſure. He was perſuaded with difficulty to ſwallow nouriſhment ſufficient for the ſupport of life, and a conſumption was apprehended. The ſociety of Agnes formed his only comfort. Though accident had never permitted their being much together, he entertained for her a ſincere friendſhip and attachment. Perceiving how neceſſary ſhe was to him, ſhe ſeldom quitted his chamber. She liſtened to his complaints with unwearied attention, and ſoothed him by the gentleneſs of her manners, and by ſympathiſing with his diſtreſs. She ſtill inhabited the palace de Villa-Franca, the poſſeſſors of which treated her with marked affection. The duke had intimated to the marquis his wiſhes reſpecting Virginia. The match was unexceptionable; Lorenzo was heir to his uncle's immenſe property, and was diſtinguiſhed

guiſhed in Madrid for his agreeable perſon, extenſive knowledge, and propriety of conduct. Add to this, that the marchioneſs had diſcovered how ſtrong was her daughter's prepoſſeſſion in his favour.

In conſequence, the duke's propoſal was accepted without heſitation: every precaution was taken to induce Lorenzo's ſeeing the lady with thoſe ſentiments which ſhe ſo well merited to excite. In her viſits to her brother, Agnes was frequently accompanied by the marchioneſs; and as ſoon as he was able to move into his antichamber, Virginia, under her mother's protection, was ſometimes permitted to expreſs her wiſhes for his recovery. This ſhe did with ſuch delicacy, the manner in which ſhe mentioned Antonia was ſo tender and ſoothing, and when ſhe lamented her rival's melancholy fate, her bright eyes ſhone ſo beautiful through her tears, that Lorenzo could not behold or liſten to her without emotion. His relations, as well as the lady, perceived

perceived that with every day her ſociety ſeemed to give him freſh pleaſure, and that he ſpoke of her in terms of ſtronger admiration. However, they prudently kept their obſervations to themſelves. No word was dropped, which might lead him to ſuſpect their deſigns. They continued their former conduct and attention, and left time to ripen into a warmer ſentiment the friendſhip which he already felt for Virginia.

In the mean while, her viſits became more frequent; and latterly there was ſcarce a day, of which ſhe did not paſs ſome part by the ſide of Lorenzo's couch. He gradually regained his ſtrength, but the progreſs of his recovery was ſlow and doubtful. One evening he ſeemed to be in better ſpirits than uſual: Agnes and her lover, the duke, Virginia, and her parents were ſitting round him. He now for the firſt time entreated his ſiſter to inform him how ſhe had eſcaped the effects of the poiſon which St. Urſula had ſeen her ſwallow. Fearful of recalling thoſe ſcenes to his mind

in

in which Antonia had periſhed, ſhe had hitherto concealed from him the hiſtory of her ſufferings. As he now ſtarted the ſubject himſelf, and thinking that perhaps the narrative of her ſorrows might draw him from the contemplation of thoſe on which he dwelt too conſtantly, ſhe immediately complied with his requeſt. The reſt of the company had already heard her ſtory: but the intereſt which all preſent felt for its heroine, made them anxious to hear it repeated. The whole ſociety ſeconding Lorenzo's entreaties, Agnes obeyed. She firſt recounted the diſcovery which had taken place in the abbey-chapel, the domina's reſentment, and the midnight ſcene of which St. Urſula had been a concealed witneſs. Though the nun had already deſcribed this latter event, Agnes now related it more circumſtantially, and at large. After which ſhe proceeded in her narrative as follows:

CONCLU-

CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF AGNES DE MEDINA.

MY ſuppoſed death was attended with the greateſt agonies. Thoſe moments which I believed my laſt were embittered by the domina's aſſurances that I could not eſcape perdition; and as my eyes cloſed, I heard her rage exhale itſelf in curſes on my offence. The horror of this ſituation, of a death-bed from which hope was baniſhed, of a ſleep from which I was only to wake to find myſelf the prey of flames and furies, was more dreadful than I can deſcribe. When animation revived in me, my ſoul was ſtill impreſſed with theſe terrible ideas. I looked round with fear, expecting to behold the miniſters of divine vegeance. For the firſt hour, my ſenſes were ſo bewildered, and my brain ſo dizzy, that I ſtrove in vain to arrange the ſtrange images which floated in wild confuſion before me. If I endeavoured to raiſe myſelf from the ground, the wandering of my head deceived me.

me. Every thing around me ſeemed to rock, and I ſank once more upon the earth. My weak and dazzled eyes were unable to bear a nearer approach to a gleam of light, which I ſaw trembling above me. I was compelled to cloſe them again, and remain motionleſs in the ſame poſture.

A full hour elapſed, before I was ſufficiently myſelf to examine the ſurrounding objects. When I did examine them, what terror filled my boſom! I found myſelf extended upon a ſort of wicker couch. It had ſix handles to it, which doubtleſs had ſerved the nuns to convey me to my grave. I was covered with a linen cloth: ſeveral faded flowers were ſtrown over me. On one ſide lay a ſmall wooden crucifix; on the other a roſary of large beads. Four low narrow walls confined me. The top was alſo covered, and in it was fitted a ſmall grated door, through which was admitted the little air that circulated in this miſerable place. A faint glimmering of light, which ſtreamed through the bars, permitted

permitted me to diſtinguiſh the ſurrounding horrors. I was oppreſſed by a noiſome ſuffocating ſmell; and perceiving that the grated door was unfaſtened, I thought that I might poſſibly effect my eſcape. As I raiſed myſelf with this deſign, my hand reſted upon ſomething ſoft: I graſped it, and advanced it towards the light. Almighty God! what was my diſguſt! my conſternation! In ſpite of its putridity, and the worms which preyed upon it, I perceived a corrupted human head, and recogniſed the features of a nun who had died ſome months before. I threw it from me, and ſank almoſt lifeleſs upon my bier.

When my ſtrength returned, this circumſtance, and the conſciouſneſs of being ſurrounded by the loathſome and mouldering bodies of my companions, increaſed my deſire to eſcape from my fearful priſon. I again moved towards the light. The grated door was within my reach. I lifted it without difficulty: probably it had been left uncloſed, to facilitate my quitting the dungeon.

dungeon. Aiding myſelf by the irregularity of the walls, ſome of whoſe ſtones projected beyond the reſt, I contrived to aſcend them, and drag myſelf out of my priſon. I now found myſelf in a vault tolerably ſpacious. Several tombs, ſimilar in appearance to that whence I had juſt eſcaped, were ranged along the ſides in order, and ſeemed to be conſiderably ſunk within the earth. A ſepulchral lamp was ſuſpended from the roof by an iron chain, and ſhed a gloomy light through the dungeon. Emblems of death were ſeen on every ſide: ſkulls, ſhoulder-blades, thigh-bones, and other reliques of mortality, were ſcattered upon the dewy ground. Each tomb was ornamented with a large crucifix, and in one corner ſtood a wooden ſtatue of St. Clare. To theſe objects I at firſt paid no attention: a door, the only outlet from the vault, had attracted my eyes. I haſtened towards it, having wrapped my winding-ſheet cloſely round me. I puſhed againſt the door, and to my inexpreſſible terror found that it was faſtened on the outſide.

I gueſſed

I gueſſed immediately, that the prioreſs, miſtaking the nature of the liquor with ſhe had compelled me to drink, inſtead of poiſon had adminiſtered a ſtrong opiate. From this I concluded that, being to all appearance dead, I had received the rites of burial; and that, deprived of the power of making my exiſtence known, it would be my fate to expire of hunger. This idea penetrated me with horror, not merely for my own ſake, but that of the innocent creature who ſtill lived within my boſom. I again endeavoured to open the door, but it reſiſted all my efforts. I ſtretched my voice to the extent of its compaſs, and ſhrieked for aid. I was remote from the hearing of every one. No friendly voice replied to mine. A profound and melancholy ſilence prevailed through the vault, and I deſpaired of liberty. My long abſtinence from food now began to torment me. The tortures which hunger inflicted on me, were the moſt painful and inſupportable: yet they ſeemed to increaſe with every hour which paſſed over my head.

Sometimes I threw myſelf upon the ground, and rolled upon it wild and deſperate: ſometimes ſtarting up, I returned to the door, again ſtrove to force it open, and repeated my fruitleſs cries for ſuccour. Often was I on the point of ſtriking my temple againſt the ſharp corner of ſome monument, daſhing out my brains, and thus terminating my woes at once. But ſtill the remembrance of my baby vanquiſhed my reſolution. I trembled at a deed, which equally endangered my child's exiſtence and my own. Then would I vent my anguiſh in loud exclamations and paſſionate complaints; and then again my ſtrength failing me, ſilent and hopeleſs I would ſit me down upon the baſe of St. Clare's ſtatue, fold my arms, and abandon myſelf to ſullen deſpair. Thus paſſed ſeveral wretched hours. Death advanced towards me with rapid ſtrides, and I expected that every ſucceeding moment would be that of my diſſolution. Suddenly a neighbouring tomb caught my eye: a baſket ſtood upon it,

which till then I had not obſerved. I ſtarted from my ſeat: I made towards it as ſwiftly as my exhauſted frame would permit. How eagerly did I ſeize the baſket, on finding it to contain a loaf of coarſe bread and a ſmall bottle of water!

I threw myſelf with avidity upon theſe humble aliments. They had to all appearance been placed in the vault for ſeveral days. The bread was hard, and the water tainted: yet never did I taſte food to me ſo delicious. When the cravings of appetite were ſatisfied, I buſied myſelf with conjectures upon this new circumſtance. I debated whether the baſket had been placed there with a view to my neceſſity. Hope anſwered my doubts in the affirmative. Yet who could gueſs me to be in need of ſuch aſſiſtance? If my exiſtence was known, why was I detained in this gloomy vault? If I was kept a priſoner, what meant the ceremony of committing me to the tomb? Or, if I was doomed to periſh with hunger, to whoſe pity was I indebted for proviſions

placed within my reach? A friend would not have kept my dreadful punishment a secret: neither did it seem probable that an enemy would have taken pains to supply me with the means of existence. Upon the whole I was inclined to think, that the domina's designs upon my life had been discovered by some one of my partisans in the convent, who had found means to substitute an opiate for poison; that she had furnished me with food to support me, till she could effect my delivery; and that she was then employed in giving intelligence to my relations of my danger, and pointing out a way to release me from captivity. Yet why then was the quality of my provisions so coarse? How could my friend have entered the vault without the domina's knowledge? and if she had entered, why was the door fastened so carefully? These reflections staggered me: yet still this idea was the most favourable to my hopes, and I dwelt upon it in preference.

My meditations were interrupted by the ſound of diſtant foot-ſteps. They approached, but ſlowly. Rays of light now darted through the crevices of the door. Uncertain whether the perſons who advanced came to relieve me, or were conducted by ſome other motive to the vault, I failed not to attract their notice by loud cries for help. Still the ſounds drew near. The light grew ſtronger. At length with inexpreſſible pleaſure I heard the key turning in the lock. Perſuaded that my deliverance was at hand, I flew towards the door with a ſhriek of joy. It opened: but all my hopes of eſcape died away, when the prioreſs appeared, followed by the ſame four nuns who had been witneſſes of my ſuppoſed death. They bore torches in their hands, and gazed upon me in fearful ſilence.

I ſtarted back in terror. The domina deſcended into the vault, as did alſo her companions. She bent upon me a ſtern reſentful eye, but expreſſed no ſurpriſe at finding

finding me ſtill living. She took the ſeat which I had juſt quitted. The door was again cloſed, and the nuns ranged themſelves behind their ſuperior, while the glare of their torches, dimmed by the vapours and dampneſs of the vault, gilded with cold beams the ſurrounding monuments. For ſome moments all preſerved a dead and ſolemn ſilence. I ſtood at ſome diſtance from the prioreſs. At length ſhe beckoned me to advance. Trembling at the ſeverity of her aſpect, my ſtrength ſcarce ſufficed me to obey her. I drew near, but my limbs were unable to ſupport their burthen. I ſank upon my knees, I claſped my hands, and lifted them up to her for mercy, but had no power to articulate a ſyllable.

She gazed upon me with angry eyes.

" Do I ſee a penitent, or a criminal ?" ſhe ſaid at length : " Are thoſe hands raiſed in contrition for your crimes, or in fear of meeting their puniſhment ? Do thoſe tears acknowledge the juſtice of your doom, or

only ſolicit mitigation of your ſufferings? I fear me, 'tis the latter!"

She pauſed, but kept her eye ſtill fixed upon mine.

"Take courage," ſhe continued; "I wiſh not for your death, but your repentance. The draught which I adminiſtered was no poiſon, but an opiate. My intention in deceiving you, was to make you feel the agonies of a guilty conſcience, had death overtaken you ſuddenly, while your crimes were ſtill unrepented. You have ſuffered thoſe agonies; I have brought you to be familiar with the ſharpneſs of death, and I truſt that your momentary anguiſh will prove to you an eternal benefit. It is not my deſign to deſtroy your immortal ſoul, or bid you ſeek the grave, burthened with the weight of ſins unexpiated. No, daughter, far from it; I will purify you with wholeſome chaſtiſement, and furniſh you with full leiſure for contrition and remorſe. Hear then my ſentence: The ill-judged zeal of your friends delayed its execution, but

cannot

cannot now prevent it. All Madrid believes you to be no more; your relations are thoroughly perſuaded of your death, and the nuns your partiſans have aſſiſted at your funeral. Your exiſtence can never be ſuſpected. I have taken ſuch precautions as muſt render it an impenetrable myſtery. Then abandon all thoughts of a world from which you are eternally ſeparated, and employ the few hours which are allowed you in preparing for the next."

This exordium led me to expect ſomething terrible. I trembled, and would have ſpoken to deprecate her wrath; but a motion of the domina commanded me to be ſilent. She proceeded:

"Though of late years unjuſtly neglected, and now oppoſed by many of our miſguided ſiſters (whom Heaven convert!) it is my intention to revive the laws of our order in their full force. That againſt incontinence is ſevere, but no more than ſo monſtrous an offence demands. Submit to it, daughter, without reſiſtance; you will

find the benefit of patience and reſignation in a better life than this. Liſten then to the ſentence of St. Clare.—Beneath theſe vaults there exiſt priſons, intended to receive ſuch criminals as yourſelf: artfully is their entrance concealed, and ſhe who enters them muſt reſign all hopes of liberty. Thither muſt you now be conveyed. Food ſhall be ſupplied you, but not ſufficient for the indulgence of appetite: you ſhall have juſt enough to keep together body and ſoul, and its quality ſhall be the ſimpleſt and coarſeſt. Weep, daughter, weep, and moiſten your bread with your tears: God knows, that you have ample cauſe for ſorrow! Chained down in one of theſe ſecret dungeons, ſhut out from the world and light for ever, with no comfort but religion, no ſociety but repentance; thus muſt you groan away the remainder of your days. Such are St. Clare's orders; ſubmit to them without repining. Follow me!"

Thunder-ſtruck at this barbarous decree, my little remaining ſtrength abandoned

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me. I anſwered only by falling at her feet, and bathing them with tears. The domina, unmoved by my affliction, roſe from her ſeat with a ſtately air: ſhe repeated her commands in an abſolute tone; but my exceſſive faintneſs made me unable to obey her. Mariana and Alix raiſed me from the ground, and carried me forwards in their arms. The prioreſs moved on, leaning on Violante, and Camilla preceded her with a torch. Thus paſſed our ſad proceſſion along the paſſages, in ſilence only broken by my ſighs and groans. We ſtopped before the principal ſhrine of St. Clare. The ſtatue was removed from its pedeſtal, though how I knew not. The nuns afterwards raiſed an iron grate, till then concealed by the image, and let it fall on the other ſide with a loud craſh. The awful ſound, repeated by the vaults above and caverns below me, rouſed me from the deſpondent apathy in which I had been plunged. I looked before me; an abyſs preſented itſelf to my affrighted eyes, and a

ſteep and narrow ſtair-caſe, whither my conductors were leading me. I ſhrieked, and ſtarted back. I implored compaſſion, rent the air with my cries, and ſummoned both heaven and earth to my aſſiſtance. In vain! I was hurried down the ſtair-caſe, and forced into one of the cells which lined the cavern's ſides.

My blood ran cold, as I gazed upon this melancholy abode. The cold vapours hovering in the air, the walls green with damp, the bed of ſtraw ſo forlorn and comfortleſs, the chain deſtined to bind me for ever to my priſon, and the reptiles of every deſcription, which, as the torches advanced towards them, I deſcried hurrying to their retreats, ſtruck my heart with terrors almoſt too exquiſite for nature to bear. Driven by deſpair to madneſs, I burſt ſuddenly from the nuns who held me; I threw myſelf upon my knees before the prioreſs, and beſought her mercy in the moſt paſſionate and frantic terms.

"If not on me," ſaid I, "look at leaſt

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with pity on that innocent being, whoſe life is attached to mine! Great is my crime, but let not my child ſuffer for it! My baby has committed no fault. Oh! ſpare me for the ſake of my unborn offſpring, whom, ere it taſtes life, your ſeverity dooms to deſtruction!"

The prioreſs drew back haſtily; ſhe forced her habit from my graſp, as if my touch had been contagious.

"What!" ſhe exclaimed with an exaſperated air; "What! Dare you plead for the produce of your ſhame? Shall a creature be permitted to live, conceived in guilt ſo monſtrous? Abandoned woman, ſpeak for him no more! Better that the wretch ſhould periſh than live: begotten in perjury, incontinence, and pollution, it cannot fail to prove a prodigy of vice. Hear me, thou guilty! Expect no mercy from me, either for yourſelf or brat. Rather pray that death may ſeize you before you produce it; or, if it muſt ſee the light, that its eyes may immediately be cloſed

again for ever! No aid ſhall be given you in your labour; bring your offspring into the world yourſelf, feed it yourſelf, nurſe it yourſelf, bury it yourſelf: God grant that the latter may happen ſoon, leſt you receive comfort from the fruit of your iniquity!"

This inhuman ſpeech, the threats which it contained, the dreadful ſufferings foretold to me by the domina, and her prayers for my infant's death, on whom, though unborn, I already doted, were more than my exhauſted frame could ſupport. Uttering a deep groan, I fell ſenſeleſs at the feet of my unrelenting enemy. I know not how long I remained in this ſituation; but I imagine that ſome time muſt have elapſed before my recovery, ſince it ſufficed the prioreſs and her nuns to quit the cavern. When my ſenſes returned, I found myſelf in ſilence and ſolitude. I heard not even the retiring foot-ſteps of my perſecutors. All was huſhed, and all was dreadful! I had been thrown upon the bed of ſtraw:

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the heavy chain which I had already eyed with terror, was wound around my waiſt, and faſtened me to the wall. A lamp glimmering with dull melancholy rays through my dungeon, permitted my diſtinguiſhing all its horrors. It was ſeparated from the cavern by a low and irregular wall of ſtone. A large chaſm was left open in it, which formed the entrance, for door there was none. A leaden crucifix was in front of my ſtraw couch. A tattered rug lay near me, as did alſo a chaplet of beads; and not far from me ſtood a pitcher of water, and a wicker-baſket containing a ſmall loaf, and a bottle of oil to ſupply my lamp.

With a deſpondent eye did I examine this ſcene of ſuffering: when I reflected that I was doomed to paſs in it the remainder of my days, my heart was rent with bitter anguiſh. I had once been taught to look forward to a lot ſo different! At one time my proſpects had appeared ſo bright, ſo flattering! Now all was loſt to me. Friends, comfort,

comfort, ſociety, happineſs, in one moment I was deprived of all! Dead to the world, dead to pleaſure, I lived to nothing but the ſenſe of miſery. How fair did that world ſeem to me, from which I was for-ever excluded! How many loved objects did it contain, whom I never ſhould behold again! As I threw a look of terror round my priſon, as I ſhrunk from the cutting wind which howled through my ſubterraneous dwelling, the change ſeemed ſo ſtriking, ſo abrupt, that I doubted its reality. That the duke de Medina's niece, that the de-ſtined bride of the marquis de las Ciſternas, one bred up in affluence, related to the nobleſt families in Spain, and rich in a multitude of affectionate friends—that ſhe ſhould in one moment become a captive, ſeparated from the world for ever, weighed down with chains, and reduced to ſupport life with the coarſeſt aliments—appeared a change ſo ſudden and incredible, that I be-lieved myſelf the ſport of ſome frightful viſion. Its continuance convinced me of

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my miſtake with but too much certainty. Every morning I looked for ſome relief from my ſufferings: every morning my hopes were diſappointed. At length I abandoned all idea of eſcaping, I reſigned myſelf to my fate, and only expected liberty when ſhe came the companion of death.

My mental anguiſh, and the dreadful ſcenes in which I had been an actreſs, advanced the period of my labour. In ſolitude and miſery, abandoned by all, unaſſiſted by art, uncomforted by friendſhip, with pangs which if witneſſed would have touched the hardeſt heart, was I delivered of my wretched burden. It came alive into the world; but I knew not how to treat it, or by what means to preſerve its exiſtence. I could only bathe it with tears, warm it in my boſom, and offer up prayers for its ſafety. I was ſoon deprived of this mournful employment: the want of proper attendance, my ignorance how to nurſe it, the bitter cold of the dungeon, and the unwholeſome

wholeſome air which inflated its lungs, terminated my ſweet babe's ſhort and painful exiſtence. It expired in a few hours after its birth, and I witneſſed its death with agonies which beggar all deſcription.

But my grief was unavailing. My infant was no more; nor could all my ſighs impart to its little tender frame the breath of a moment. I rent my winding-ſheet, and wrapped in it my lovely child. I placed it on my boſom, its ſoft arm folded round my neck, and its pale cold cheek reſting upon mine. Thus did its lifeleſs limbs repoſe, while I covered it with kiſſes, talked to it, wept, and moaned over it without remiſſion day or night. Camilla entered my priſon regularly once every twenty-four hours to bring me food. In ſpite of her flinty nature, ſhe could not behold this ſpectacle unmoved. She feared that grief ſo exceſſive would at length turn my brain; and in truth I was not always in my proper ſenſes. From a principle of compaſſion ſhe urged me to permit the corſe to be buried;

ried; but to this I never would conſent. I vowed, not to part with it while I had life; its preſence was my only comfort, and no perſuaſion could induce me to give it up. It ſoon became a maſs of putridity, and to every eye was a loathſome and diſguſting object, to every eye but a mother's. In vain did human feelings bid me recoil from this emblem of mortality with repugnance. I withſtood, and vanquiſhed that repugnance. I perſiſted in holding my infant to my boſom, in lamenting it, loving it, adoring it! Hour after hour have I paſſed upon my ſorry couch, contemplating what had once been my child. I endeavoured to retrace its features through the livid corruption with which they were overſpread. During my confinement, this ſad occupation was my only delight; and at that time worlds ſhould not have bribed me to give it up. Even when releaſed from my priſon, I brought away my child in my arms. The repreſentations of my two kind friends—[Here ſhe took the hands

of

of the marchioneſs and Virginia, and preſſed them alternately to her lips]—at length perſuaded me to reſign my unhappy infant to the grave. Yet I parted from it with reluctance. However, reaſon at length prevailed; I ſuffered it to be taken from me, and it now repoſes in conſecrated ground.

I before mentioned, that regularly once a day Camilla brought me food. She ſought not to embitter my ſorrows with reproach. She bade me, 'tis true, reſign all hopes of liberty and worldly happineſs; but ſhe encouraged me to bear with patience my temporary diſtreſs, and adviſed me to draw comfort from religion. My ſituation evidently affected her more than ſhe ventured to expreſs; but ſhe believed that to extenuate my fault would make me leſs anxious to repent it. Often while her lips painted the enormity of my guilt in glaring colours, her eyes betrayed how ſenſible ſhe was to my ſufferings. In fact, I am certain that none of my tormentors (for the three

three other nuns entered my priſon occaſionally) were ſo much actuated by the ſpirit of oppreſſive cruelty, as by the idea that to afflict my body was the only way to preſerve my ſoul. Nay, even this perſuaſion might not have had ſuch weight with them, and they might have thought my puniſhment too ſevere, had not their good diſpoſitions been repreſſed by blind obedience to their ſuperior. Her reſentment exiſted in full force. My project of elopement having been diſcovered by the abbot of the Capuchins, ſhe ſuppoſed herſelf lowered in his opinion by my diſgrace, and in conſequence her hate was inveterate. She told the nuns, to whoſe cuſtody I was committed, that my fault was of the moſt heinous nature, that no ſufferings could equal the offence, and that nothing could ſave me from eternal perdition but puniſhing my guilt with the utmoſt ſeverity. The ſuperior's word is an oracle to but too many of a convent's inhabitants. The nuns believed whatever the prioreſs choſe to aſſert: though contradicted

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by reaſon and charity, they heſitated not to admit the truth of her arguments. They followed her injunctions to the very letter, and were fully perſuaded, that to treat me with lenity, or to ſhew the leaſt pity for my woes, would be a direct means to deſtroy my chance for ſalvation.

Camilla being moſt employed about me, was particularly charged by the prioreſs to treat me with harſhneſs. In compliance with theſe orders, ſhe frequently ſtrove to convince me how juſt was my puniſhment, and how enormous was my crime. She bade me think myſelf too happy in ſaving my ſoul by mortifying my body, and even threatened me ſometimes with eternal perdition. Yet, as I before obſerved, ſhe always concluded by words of encouragement and comfort; and though uttered by Camilla's lips, I eaſily recogniſed the domina's expreſſions. Once, and once only, the prioreſs viſited me in my dungeon. She then treated me with the moſt unrelenting cruelty. She loaded me with reproaches,

taunted

taunted me with my frailty; and, when I implored her mercy, told me to aſk it of Heaven, ſince I deſerved none on earth. She even gazed upon my lifeleſs infant without emotion; and when ſhe left me, I heard her charge Camilla to increaſe the hardſhips of my captivity. Unfeeling woman! But let me check my reſentment. She has expiated her errors by her ſad and unexpected death. Peace be with her! and may her crimes be forgiven in heaven, as I forgive her my ſufferings on earth!

Thus did I drag on a miſerable exiſtence. Far from growing familiar with my priſon, I beheld it every moment with new horror. The cold ſeemed more piercing and bitter, the air more thick and peſtilential. My frame became weak, feveriſh, and emaciated. I was unable to riſe from the bed of ſtraw, and exerciſe my limbs in the narrow limits to which the length of my chain permitted me to move. Though exhauſted, faint, and weary, I trembled to profit by the approach of ſleep. My ſlumbers

bers were conſtantly interrupted by ſome obnoxious inſect crawling over me. Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poiſonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathſome length along my boſom. Sometimes the quick cold lizard rouſed me, leaving his ſlimy track upon my face, and entangling itſelf in the treſſes of my wild and matted hair. Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted fleſh of my infant. At ſuch times I ſhrieked with terror and diſguſt; and, while I ſhook off the reptile, trembled with all a woman's weakneſs.

Such was my ſituation when Camilla was ſuddenly taken ill. A dangerous fever, ſuppoſed to be infectious, confined her to her bed. Every one, except the lay ſiſter appointed to nurſe her, avoided her with caution, and feared to catch the diſeaſe. She was perfectly delirious, and by no means capable of attending to me. The domina, and the nuns admitted to the myſ-

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tery, had latterly entirely given me over to Camilla's care. In conſequence, they buſied themſelves no more about me; and, occupied by preparing for the approaching feſtival, it is more than probable that I never once entered into their thoughts. Of the reaſon of Camilla's negligence I have been informed ſince my releaſe by the mother St. Urſula. At that time I was very far from ſuſpecting its cauſe. On the contrary, I waited for my gaoler's appearance at firſt with impatience, and afterwards with deſpair. One day paſſed away: another followed it: the third arrived. Still no Camilla! ſtill no food! I knew the lapſe of time by the waſting of my lamp, to feed which, fortunately a week's ſupply of oil had been left me. I ſuppoſed, either that the nuns had forgotten me, or that the domina had ordered them to let me periſh. The latter idea ſeemed the moſt probable: yet ſo natural is the love of life, that I trembled to find it true. Though embittered by every ſpecies of miſery, my

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exiſtence was ſtill dear to me, and I dreaded to loſe it. Every ſucceeding minute proved to me that I muſt abandon all hopes of relief. I was become an abſolute ſkeleton: my eyes already failed me, and my limbs were beginning to ſtiffen. I could only expreſs my anguiſh, and the pangs of that hunger which gnawed my heart-ſtrings, by frequent groans, whoſe melancholy ſound the vaulted roof of the dungeon re-echoed. I reſigned myſelf to my fate: I already expected the moment of diſſolution, when my guardian angel—when my beloved brother arrived in time to ſave me. My ſight, grown dim and feeble, at firſt refuſed to recognize him: and when I did diſtinguiſh his features, the ſudden burſt of rapture was too much for me to bear. I was overpowered by the ſwell of joy at once more beholding a friend, and that a friend ſo dear to me. Nature could not ſupport my emotions, and took her refuge in inſenſibility.

You already know what are my obligations

tions to the family of Villa-Franca. But what you cannot know, is the extent of my gratitude, boundleſs as the excellence of my benefactors. Lorenzo! Raymond! names ſo dear to me! teach me to bear with fortitude this ſudden tranſition from miſery to bliſs. So lately a captive, oppreſſed with chains, periſhing with hunger, ſuffering every inconvenience of cold and want, hidden from the light, excluded from ſociety, hopeleſs, neglected, and, as I feared, forgotten: now reſtored to life and liberty, enjoying all the comforts of affluence and eaſe, ſurrounded by thoſe who are moſt loved by me, and on the point of becoming his bride who has long been wedded to my heart, my happineſs is ſo exquiſite, ſo perfect, that ſcarcely can my brain ſuſtain the weight. One only wiſh remains ungratified. It is to ſee my brother in his former health, and to know that Antonia's memory is buried in her grave. Granted this prayer, I have nothing more to deſire. I truſt that my paſt

ſufferings have purchaſed from Heaven the pardon of my momentary weakneſs. That I have offended, offended greatly and grievouſly, I am fully conſcious. But let not my huſband, becauſe he once conquered my virtue, doubt the propriety of my future conduct. I have been frail and full of error: but I yielded not to the warmth of conſtitution. Raymond, affection for you betrayed me. I was too confident of my ſtrength: but I depended no leſs on your honour than my own. I had vowed never to ſee you more. Had it not been for the conſequences of that unguarded moment, my reſolution had been kept. Fate willed it otherwiſe, and I cannot but rejoice at its decree. Still my conduct has been highly blameable; and while I attempt to juſtify myſelf, I bluſh at recollecting my imprudence. Let me then diſmiſs the ungrateful ſubject; firſt aſſuring you, Raymond, that you ſhall have no cauſe to repent our union, and that, the more culpable have been the errors of your

miſtreſs,

miſtreſs, the more exemplary ſhall be the conduct of your wife.

Here Agnes ceaſed; and the marquis replied to her addreſs in terms equally ſincere and affectionate. Lorenzo expreſſed his ſatisfaction at the proſpect of being ſo cloſely connected with a man for whom he had ever entertained the higheſt eſteem. The Pope's bull had fully and effectually releaſed Agnes from her religious engagements. The marriage was therefore celebrated as ſoon as the needful preparations had been made: for the marquis wiſhed to have the ceremony performed with all poſſible ſplendour and publicity. This being over, and the bride having received the compliments of Madrid, ſhe departed with Don Raymond for his caſtle in Andaluſia. Lorenzo accompanied them, as did alſo the marchioneſs de Villa-Franca and her lovely daughter. It is needleſs to ſay that

Theodore was of the party, and would be impoſſible to deſcribe his joy at his maſter's marriage. Previous to his departure the marquis, to atone in ſome meaſure for his paſt neglect, made ſome enquiries relative to Elvira. Finding that ſhe, as well as her daughter, had received many ſervices from Leonella and Jacintha, he ſhewed his reſpect to the memory of his ſiſter-in-law by making the two women handſome preſents. Lorenzo followed his example. Leonella was highly flattered by the attentions of noblemen ſo diſtinguiſhed, and Jacintha bleſſed the hour on which her houſe was bewitched.

On her ſide, Agnes failed not to reward her convent friends. The worthy mother St. Urſula, to whom ſhe owed her liberty, was named, at her requeſt, ſuperintendant of "the Ladies of Charity." This was one of the beſt and moſt opulent ſocieties throughout Spain. Bertha and Cornelia, not chooſing to quit their friend, were appointed to principal charges in the ſame eſta-

eſtabliſhment. As to the nuns who had aided the domina in perſecuting Agnes; Camilla, being confined by illneſs to her bed, had periſhed in the flames which conſumed St. Clare's convent. Mariana, Alix, and Violante, as well as two more, had fallen victims to the popular rage. The three others who had in council ſupported the domina's ſentence, were ſeverely reprimanded, and baniſhed to religious houſes in obſcure and diſtant provinces. Here they languiſhed away a few years, aſhamed of their former weakneſs, and ſhunned by their companions with averſion and contempt.

Nor was the fidelity of Flora permitted to go unrewarded. Her wiſhes being conſulted, ſhe declared herſelf impatient to reviſit her native land. In conſequence, a paſſage was procured for her to Cuba, where ſhe arrived in ſafety, loaded with the preſents of Raymond and Lorenzo.

The debts of gratitude diſcharged, Agnes was at liberty to purſue her favourite plan. Lodged in the ſame houſe, Lo-

renzo and Virginia were eternally together. The more he ſaw of her, the more was he convinced of her merit. On her part, ſhe laid herſelf out to pleaſe; and not to ſucceed was for her impoſſible. Lorenzo witneſſed with admiration her beautiful perſon, elegant manners, innumerable talents, and ſweet diſpoſition. He was alſo much flattered by her prejudice in his favour, which ſhe had not ſufficient art to conceal. However, his ſentiments partook not of that ardent character which had marked his affection for Antonia. The image of that lovely and unfortunate girl ſtill lived in his heart, and baffled all Virginia's efforts to diſplace it. Still, when the duke propoſed to him the match, which he wiſhed ſo earneſtly to take place, his nephew did not reject the offer. The urgent ſupplications of his friends, and the lady's merit, conquered his repugnance to entering into new engagements. He propoſed himſelf to the marquis de Villa-Franca, and was accepted with joy and gratitude. Virginia became his wife, nor did ſhe ever

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give him cauſe to repent his choice. His eſteem increaſed for her daily. Her unremitted endeavours to pleaſe him could not but ſucceed. His affection aſſumed ſtronger and warmer colours. Antonia's image was gradually effaced from his boſom, and Virginia became ſole miſtreſs of that heart, which ſhe well deſerved to poſſeſs without a partner.

The remaining years of Raymond and Agnes, of Lorenzo and Virginia, were happy as can be thoſe allotted to mortals, born to be the prey of grief, and ſport of diſappointment. The exquiſite ſorrows with which they had been afflicted, made them think lightly of every ſucceeding woe. They had felt the ſharpeſt darts in misfortune's quiver. Thoſe which remained, appeared blunt in compariſon. Having weathered fate's heavieſt ſtorms, they looked calmly upon its terrors: or, if ever they felt affliction's caſual gales, they ſeemed to them gentle as zephyrs which breathe over ſummer-ſeas.

CHAP. XII.

——He was a fell deſpightful fiend:
Hell holds none worſe in baleful bower below:
By pride, and wit, and rage, and rancor keened:
Of man, alike if good or bad, the foe.

THOMSON.

ON the day following Antonia's death, all Madrid was a ſcene of conſternation and amazement. An archer who had witneſſed the adventure in the ſepulchre, had indiſcreetly related the circumſtances of the murder: he had alſo named the perpetrator. The confuſion was without example, which this intelligence raiſed among the devotees. Moſt of them diſbelieved it, and went themſelves to the abbey to aſcertain the fact. Anxious to avoid the ſhame to which their ſuperior's ill conduct expoſed the whole brotherhood, the monks aſſured

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the viſitors, that Ambroſio was prevented from receiving them as uſual by nothing but illneſs. This attempt was unſucceſsful. The ſame excuſe being repeated day after day, the archer's ſtory gradually obtained confidence. The abbot's partiſans abandoned him: no one entertained a doubt of his guilt: and they who before had been the warmeſt in his praiſe, were now the moſt vociferous in his condemnation.

While his innocence or guilt was debated in Madrid with the utmoſt acrimony, Ambroſio was a prey to the pangs of conſcious villainy, and the terrors of puniſhment impending over him. When he looked back to the eminence on which he had lately ſtood, univerſally honoured and reſpected, at peace with the world and with himſelf, ſcarcely could he believe that he was indeed the culprit, whoſe crimes and whoſe fate he trembled to conſider. But a few weeks had elapſed, ſince he was pure and virtuous, courted by the wiſeſt and nobleſt in Madrid, and regarded by the

people with a reverence that approached idolatry. He now ſaw himſelf ſtained with the moſt loathed and monſtrous ſins, the object of univerſal execration, a priſoner of the Holy Office, and probably doomed to periſh in tortures the moſt ſevere. He could not hope to deceive his judges: the proofs of his guilt were too ſtrong. His being in the ſepulchre at ſo late an hour, his confuſion at the diſcovery, the dagger which in his firſt alarm he owned had been concealed by him, and the blood which had ſpirted upon his habit from Antonia's wound, ſufficiently marked him out for the aſſaſſin. He waited with agony for the day of examination. He had no reſource to comfort him in his diſtreſs. Religion could not inſpire him with fortitude. If he read the books of morality which were put into his hands, he ſaw in them nothing but the enormity of his offences. If he attempted to pray, he recollected that he deſerved not Heaven's protection, and believed his crimes ſo monſtrous as to exceed even God's

infinite goodneſs. For every other ſinner he thought there might be hope, but for him there could be none. Shuddering at the paſt, anguiſhed by the preſent, and dreading the future, thus paſſed he the few days preceding that which was marked for his trial.

That day arrived. At nine in the morning his priſon-door was unlocked; and his gaoler entering, commanded him to follow him. He obeyed with trembling. He was conducted into a ſpacious hall hung with black cloth. At the table ſat three grave ſtern-looking men, alſo habited in black: one was the Grand Inquiſitor, whom the importance of this cauſe had induced to examine into it himſelf. At a ſmaller table at a little diſtance ſat the ſecretary, provided with all neceſſary implements for writing. Ambroſio was beckoned to advance, and take his ſtation at the lower end of the table. As his eye glanced downwards, he perceived various iron inſtruments lying ſcattered upon the floor. Their

forms were unknown to him, but apprehenſion immediately gueſſed them to be engines of torture. He turned pale, and with difficulty prevented himſelf from ſinking upon the ground.

Profound ſilence prevailed, except when the inquiſitors whiſpered a few words among themſelves myſteriouſly. Near an hour paſſed away, and with every ſecond of it Ambroſio's fears grew more poignant. At length a ſmall door, oppoſite to that by which he had entered the hall, grated heavily upon its hinges. An officer appeared, and was immediately followed by the beautiful Matilda. Her hair hung about her face wildly: her cheeks were pale, and her eyes ſunk and hollow. She threw a melancholy look upon Ambroſio: he replied by one of averſion and reproach. She was placed oppoſite to him. A bell then ſounded thrice. It was the ſignal for opening the court; and the inquiſitors entered upon their office.

In theſe trials, neither the accuſation is

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mentioned nor the name of the accuſer. The priſoners are only aſked, whether they will confeſs. If they reply, that, having no crime, they can make no confeſſion, they are put to the torture without delay. This is repeated at intervals, either till the ſuſpected avow themſelves culpable, or the perſeverance of the examinants is worn out and exhauſted: but without a direct acknowledgment of their guilt, the Inquiſition never pronounces the final doom of its priſoners. In general, much time is ſuffered to elapſe without their being queſtioned; but Ambroſio's trial had been haſtened on account of a ſolemn Auto da Fé which would take place in a few days, and in which the inquiſitors meant this diſtinguiſhed culprit to perform a part, and give a ſtriking teſtimony of their vigilance.

The abbot was not merely accuſed of rape and murder; the crime of ſorcery was laid to his charge, as well as to Matilda's. She had been ſeized as an accomplice in Antonia's aſſaſſination. On ſearching her

cell,

cell, various ſuſpicious books and inſtruments were found, which juſtified the accuſation brought againſt her. To criminate the monk, the conſtellated mirror was produced, which Matilda had accidentally left in his chamber. The ſtrange figures engraved upon it caught the attention of Don Ramirez, while ſearching the abbot's cell; in conſequence, he carried it away with him. It was ſhewn to the Grand Inquiſitor, who, having conſidered it for ſome time, took off a ſmall golden croſs which hung at his girdle, and laid it upon the mirror. Inſtantly a loud noiſe was heard, reſembling a clap of thunder, and the ſteel ſhivered into a thouſand pieces. This circumſtance confirmed the ſuſpicion of the monk's having dealt in magic. It was even ſuppoſed, that his former influence over the minds of the people was entirely to be aſcribed to witchcraft.

Determined to make him confeſs not only the crimes which he had committed, but thoſe alſo of which he was innocent,

the inquiſitors began their examination. Though dreading the tortures, as he yet more dreaded death, which would conſign him to eternal torments, the abbot aſſerted his purity in a voice bold and reſolute. Matilda followed his example, but ſpoke with fear and trembling. Having in vain exhorted him to confeſs, the inquiſitors ordered the monk to be put to the queſtion. The decree was immediately executed. Ambroſio ſuffered the moſt excruciating pangs that ever were invented by human cruelty. Yet ſo dreadful is death, when guilt accompanies it, that he had ſufficient fortitude to perſiſt in his diſavowal. His agonies were redoubled in conſequence; nor was he releaſed till, fainting from exceſs of pain, inſenſibility reſcued him from the hands of his tormentors.

Matilda was next ordered to the torture; but, terrified by the ſight of the friar's ſufferings, her courage totally deſerted her. She ſank upon her knees, acknowledged her correſponding with infernal ſpirits, and

that ſhe had witneſſed the monk's aſſaſſination of Antonia; but as to the crime of ſorcery, ſhe declared herſelf the ſole criminal, and Ambroſio perfectly innocent. The latter aſſertion met with no credit. The abbot had recovered his ſenſes in time to hear the confeſſion of his accomplice: but he was too much enfeebled by what he had already undergone, to be capable at that time of ſuſtaining new torments. He was commanded back to his cell, but firſt informed, that as ſoon as he had gained ſtrength ſufficient he muſt prepare himſelf for a ſecond examination. The inquiſitors hoped that he would then be leſs hardened and obſtinate. To Matilda it was announced, that ſhe muſt expiate her crime in fire on the approaching Auto da Fé. All her tears and entreaties could procure no mitigation of her doom and ſhe was dragged by force from the hall of trial.

Returned to his dungeon, the ſufferings of Ambroſio's body were far more ſupportable than thoſe of his mind. His diſlocated

cated limbs, the nails torn from his hands and feet, and his fingers maſhed and broken by the preſſure of ſcrews, were far ſurpaſſed in anguiſh by the agitation of his ſoul and vehemence of his terrors. He ſaw that, guilty or innocent, his judges were bent upon condemning him. The remembrance of what his denial had already coſt him, terrified him at the idea of being again applied to the queſtion; and almoſt engaged him to confeſs his crimes. Then again the conſequences of his confeſſion flaſhed before him, and rendered him once more irreſolute. His death would be inevitable, and that a death the moſt dreadful. He had liſtened to Matilda's doom, and doubted not that a ſimilar was reſerved for him. He ſhuddered at the approaching Auto da Fé, at the idea of periſhing in flames, and only eſcaping from endurable torments to paſs into others more ſubtile and everlaſting! With affright did he bend his mind's eye on the ſpace beyond the grave; nor could hide from himſelf how juſtly he

ought

ought to dread Heaven's vengeance. In this labyrinth of terrors, fain would he have taken his refuge in the gloom of atheiſm; fain would he have denied the ſoul's immortality; have perſuaded himſelf that, when his eyes once cloſed, they would never more open, and that the ſame moment would annihilate his ſoul and body. Even this reſource was refuſed to him. To permit his being blind to the fallacy of this belief, his knowledge was too extenſive, his underſtanding too ſolid and juſt. He could not help feeling the exiſtence of a God. Thoſe truths, once his comfort, now preſented themſelves before him in the cleareſt light; but they only ſerved to drive him to diſtraction. They deſtroyed his ill-grounded hopes of eſcaping puniſhment; and, diſpelled by the irreſiſtible brightneſs of truth and conviction, philoſophy's deceitful vapours faded away like a dream.

In anguiſh almoſt too great for mortal frame to bear, he expected the time when he was again to be examined. He buſied himſelf

himſelf in planning ineffectual ſchemes for eſcaping both preſent and future puniſhment. Of the firſt there was no poſſibility; of the ſecond deſpair made him neglect the only means. While Reaſon forced him to acknowledge a God's exiſtence, Conſcience made him doubt the infinity of his goodneſs. He diſbelieved that a ſinner like himſelf could find mercy. He had not been deceived into error; ignorance could furniſh him with no excuſe. He had ſeen vice in her true colours. Before he committed his crimes, he had computed every ſcruple of their weight, and yet he had committed them.

"Pardon?" he would cry in an acceſs of phrenſy: "Oh! there can be none for me!"

Perſuaded of this, inſtead of humbling himſelf in penitence, of deploring his guilt, and employing his few remaining hours in deprecating Heaven's wrath, he abandoned himſelf to the tranſports of deſperate rage; he ſorrowed for the puniſhment of his crimes,

crimes, not their commiſſion; and exhaled his boſom's anguiſh in idle ſighs, in vain lamentations, in blaſphemy and deſpair. As the few beams of day which pierced through the bars of his priſon-window gradually diſappeared, and their place was ſupplied by the pale and glimmering lamp, he felt his terrors redouble, and his ideas become more gloomy, more ſolemn, more deſpondent. He dreaded the approach of ſleep. No ſooner did his eyes cloſe, wearied with tears and watching, than the dreadful viſions ſeemed to be realiſed on which his mind had dwelt during the day. He found himſelf in ſulphurous realms and burning caverns, ſurrounded by fiends appointed his tormentors, and who drove him through a variety of tortures, each of which was more dreadful than the former. Amidſt theſe diſmal ſcenes wandered the ghoſts of Elvira and her daughter. They reproached him with their deaths, recounted his crimes to the dæmons, and urged them to inflict torments of cruelty yet more refined.

Such

Such were the pictures which floated before his eyes in sleep: they vanished not till his repose was disturbed by excess of agony. Then would he start from the ground on which he had stretched himself, his brows running down with cold sweat, his eyes wild and phrensied; and he only exchanged the terrible certainty for surmises scarcely more supportable. He paced his dungeon with disordered steps; he gazed with terror upon the surrounding darkness, and often did he cry,

"Oh! fearful is night to the guilty!"

The day of his second examination was at hand. He had been compelled to swallow cordials, whose virtues were calculated to restore his bodily strength, and enable him to support the question longer. On the night preceding this dreaded day, his fears for the morrow permitted him not to sleep. His terrors were so violent as nearly to annihilate his mental powers. He sat like one stupefied near the table on which his lamp was burning dimly. Despair chained

chained up his faculties in idiotiſm, and he remained for ſome hours unable to ſpeak or move, or indeed to think.

" Look up, Ambroſio!" ſaid a voice in accents well known to him.

The monk ſtarted, and raiſed his melancholy eyes. Matilda ſtood before him. She had quitted her religious habit. She now wore a female dreſs, at once elegant and ſplendid; a profuſion of diamonds blazed upon her robes, and her hair was confined by a coronet of roſes. In her right hand ſhe held a ſmall book: a lively expreſſion of pleaſure beamed upon her countenance—but ſtill it was mingled with a wild imperious majeſty, which inſpired the monk with awe, and repreſſed in ſome meaſure his tranſports at ſeeing her.

" You here, Matilda?" he at length exclaimed: " How have you gained entrance? Where are your chains? What means this magnificence, and the joy which ſparkles in your eyes? Have our judges relented? Is there a chance of my eſcaping? Anſwer me

for

for pity, and tell me what I have to hope or fear."

"Ambroſio!" ſhe replied with an air of commanding dignity: "I have baffled the Inquiſition's fury. I am free: a few moments will place kingdoms between theſe dungeons and me; yet I purchaſe my liberty at a dear, at a dreadful price! Dare you pay the ſame, Ambroſio? Dare you ſpring without fear over the bounds which ſeparate men from angels?—You are ſilent—You look upon me with eyes of ſuſpicion and alarm—I read your thoughts, and confeſs their juſtice. Yes, Ambroſio, I have ſacrificed all for life and liberty. I am no longer a candidate for Heaven! I have renounced God's ſervice, and am enliſted beneath the banners of his foes. The deed is paſt recall; yet, were it in my power to go back, I would not. Oh! my friend, to expire in ſuch torments! to die amidſt curſes and execrations! to bear the inſults of an exaſperated mob! to be expoſed to all the mortifications of ſhame and infamy!

infamy! who can reflect without horror on ſuch a doom? Let me then exult in my exchange. I have ſold diſtant and uncertain happineſs for preſent and ſecure. I have preſerved a life, which otherwiſe I had loſt in torture; and I have obtained the power of procuring every bliſs which can make that life delicious! The infernal ſpirits obey me as their ſovereign; by their aid ſhall my days be paſſed in every refinement of luxury and voluptuouſneſs. I will enjoy unreſtrained the gratification of my ſenſes; every paſſion ſhall be indulged even to ſatiety; then will I bid my ſervants invent new pleaſures, to revive and ſtimulate my glutted appetites! I go impatient to exerciſe my newly-gained dominion. I pant to be at liberty. Nothing ſhould hold me one moment longer in this abhorred abode, but the hope of perſuading you to follow my example. Ambroſio, I ſtill love you: our mutual guilt and danger have rendered you dearer to me than ever, and I would fain ſave you from impending

pending deſtruction. Summon then your reſolution to your aid, and renounce for immediate and certain benefits the hopes of a ſalvation difficult to obtain, and perhaps altogether erroneous. Shake off the prejudice of vulgar ſouls; abandon a God who has abandoned you, and raiſe yourſelf to the level of ſuperior beings!"

She pauſed for the monk's reply: he ſhuddered while he gave it.

"Matilda!" he ſaid, after a long ſilence, in a low and unſteady voice: "What price gave you for liberty?"

She anſwered him firm and dauntleſs.

"Ambroſio, it was my ſoul!"

"Wretched woman, what have you done! Paſs but a few years, and how dreadful will be your ſufferings!"

"Weak man, paſs but this night, and how dreadful will be your own! Do you remember what you have already endured? To-morrow you muſt bear torments doubly exquiſite. Do you remember the horrors

of a fiery puniſhment? In two days you muſt be led a victim to the ſtake! What then will become of you? Still dare you hope for pardon? Still are you beguiled with viſions of ſalvation? Think upon your crimes! Think upon your luſt, your perjury, inhumanity, and hypocriſy! Think upon the innocent blood which cries to the throne of God for vengeance! and then hope for mercy! Then dream of heaven, and ſigh for worlds of light, and realms of peace and pleaſure! Abſurd! Open your eyes, Ambroſio, and be prudent. Hell is your lot; you are doomed to eternal perdition; nought lies beyond your grave, but a gulph of devouring flames. And will you then ſpeed towards that hell? Will you claſp that perdition in your arms ere 'tis needful? Will you plunge into thoſe flames while you ſtill have the power to ſhun them? 'Tis a madman's action. No, no, Ambroſio, let us for a while fly from divine vengeance. Be adviſed by me, purchaſe

by

by one moment's courage the bliſs of years; enjoy the preſent, and forget that a future lags behind."

"Matilda, your counſels are dangerous; I dare not, I will not follow them. I muſt not give up my claim to ſalvation. Monſtrous are my crimes; but God is merciful, and I will not deſpair of pardon."

"Is ſuch your reſolution? I have no more to ſay. I ſpeed to joy and liberty, and abandon you to death and eternal torments!"

"Yet ſtay one moment, Matilda! You command the infernal dæmons; you can force open theſe priſon-doors; you can releaſe me from theſe chains which weigh me down. Save me, I conjure you, and bear me from theſe fearful abodes!"

"You aſk the only boon beyond my power to beſtow. I am forbidden to aſſiſt a churchman and a partiſan of God. Renounce thoſe titles, and command me."

"I will not ſell my ſoul to perdition."

"Perſiſt in your obſtinacy till you find

yourſelf at the ſtake: then will you repent your error, and ſigh for eſcape when the moment is gone by. I quit you.——Yet ere the hour of death arrives, ſhould wiſdom enlighten you, liſten to the means of repairing your preſent fault. I leave with you this book. Read the four firſt lines of the 7th page backwards. The ſpirit, whom you have already once beheld, will immediately appear to you. If you are wiſe, we ſhall meet again; if not, farewell for ever!"

She let the book fall upon the ground. A cloud of blue fire wrapped itſelf round her. She waved her hand to Ambroſio, and diſappeared. The momentary glare which the flames poured through the dungeon, on diſſipating ſuddenly, ſeemed to have increaſed its natural gloom. The ſolitary lamp ſcarcely gave light ſufficient to guide the monk to a chair. He threw himſelf into his ſeat, folded his arms, and, leaning his head upon the table, ſank into reflections perplexing and unconnected.

He was ſtill in this attitude, when the opening of the priſon door rouſed him from his ſtupor. He was ſummoned to appear before the Grand Inquiſitor. He roſe, and followed his gaoler with painful ſteps. He was led into the ſame hall, placed before the ſame examiners, and was again interrogated whether he would confeſs. He replied as before, that, having no crimes, he could acknowledge none. But when the executioners prepared to put him to the queſtion, when he ſaw the engines of torture, and remembered the pangs which they had already inflicted, his reſolution failed him entirely. Forgetting the conſequences, and only anxious to eſcape the terrors of the preſent moment, he made an ample confeſſion. He diſcloſed every circumſtance of his guilt, and owned not merely the crimes with which he was charged, but thoſe of which he had never been ſuſpected. Being interrogated as to Matilda's flight, which had created much confuſion; he confeſſed that ſhe had ſold herſelf to Satan,

and that ſhe was indebted to ſorcery for her eſcape. He ſtill aſſured his judges, that for his own part he had never entered into any compact with the infernal ſpirits; but the threat of being tortured made him declare himſelf to be a ſorcerer and heretic, and whatever other title the inquiſitors choſe to fix upon him. In conſequence of this avowal, his ſentence was immediately pronounced. He was ordered to prepare himſelf to periſh in the Auto da Fé, which was to be ſolemnized at twelve o'clock that night. This hour was choſen, from the idea, that, the horror of the flames being heightened by the gloom of midnight, the execution would have a greater effect upon the mind of the people.

Ambroſio, rather dead than alive, was left alone in his dungeon. The moment in which this terrible decree was pronounced, had nearly proved that of his diſſolution. He looked forward to the morrow with deſpair, and his terrors increaſed with the approach of midnight. Sometimes he was

buried

buried in gloomy ſilence; at others, he raved with delirious paſſion, wrung his hands, and curſed the hour when he firſt beheld the light. In one of theſe moments his eye reſted upon Matilda's myſterious gift. His tranſports of rage were inſtantly ſuſpended. He looked earneſtly at the book; he took it up, but immediately threw it from him with horror. He walked rapidly up and down his dungeon—then ſtopped, and again fixed his eyes on the ſpot where the book had fallen. He reflected, that here at leaſt was a reſource from the fate which he dreaded. He ſtooped, and took it up a ſecond time. He remained for ſome time trembling and irreſolute; he longed to try the charm, yet feared its conſequences. The recollection of his ſentence at length fixed his indeciſion. He opened the volume; but his agitation was ſo great, that he at firſt ſought in vain for the page mentioned by Matilda. Aſhamed of himſelf, he called all his courage to his aid. He turned to the ſeventh leaf: he

began to read it aloud; but his eyes frequently wandered from the book, while he anxiously caſt them round in ſearch of the ſpirit, whom he wiſhed, yet dreaded to behold. Still he perſiſted in his deſign; and with a voice unaſſured, and frequent interruptions, he contrived to finiſh the four firſt lines of the page.

They were in a language whoſe import was totally unknown to him. Scarce had he pronounced the laſt word, when the effects of the charm were evident. A loud burſt of thunder was heard, the priſon ſhook to its very foundations, a blaze of lightning flaſhed through the cell, and in the next moment, borne upon ſulphurous whirlwinds, Lucifer ſtood before him a ſecond time. But he came not as when at Matilda's ſummons he borrowed the ſeraph's form to deceive Ambroſio. He appeared in all that uglineſs which ſince his fall from heaven had been his portion. His blaſted limbs ſtill bore marks of the Almighty's thunder. A ſwarthy darkneſs

ſpread

ſpread itſelf over his gigantic form: his hands and feet were armed with long talons. Fury glared in his eyes, which might have ſtruck the braveſt heart with terror. Over his huge ſhoulders waved two enormous ſable wings: and his hair was ſupplied by living ſnakes, which twined themſelves round his brows with frightful hiſſings. In one hand he held a roll of parchment, and in the other an iron pen. Still the lightning flaſhed around him, and the thunder with repeated burſts ſeemed to announce the diſſolution of Nature.

Terrified at an apparition ſo different from what he had expected, Ambroſio remained gazing upon the fiend, deprived of the power of utterance. The thunder had ceaſed to roll: univerſal ſilence reigned through the dungeon.

"For what am I ſummoned hither?" ſaid the dæmon, in a voice which *ſulphurous fogs had damped to hoarſeneſs.*

At the ſound, Nature ſeemed to tremble.

A violent earthquake rocked the ground, accompanied by a freſh burſt of thunder, louder and more appalling than the firſt.

Ambroſio was long unable to anſwer the dæmon's demand.

"I am condemned to die," he ſaid with a faint voice, his blood running cold while he gazed upon his dreadful viſitor. "Save me! bear me from hence!"

"Shall the reward of my ſervices be paid me? Dare you embrace my cauſe? Will you be mine, body and ſoul? Are you prepared to renounce him who made you, and him who died for you? Anſwer but 'Yes!' and Lucifer is your ſlave."

"Will no leſs price content you? Can nothing ſatisfy you but my eternal ruin? Spirit, you aſk too much. Yet convey me from this dungeon. Be my ſervant for one hour, and I will be yours for a thouſand years. Will not this offer ſuffice?"

"It will not. I muſt have your ſoul: muſt have it mine, and mine for ever."

"Inſatiate dæmon! I will not doom

myſelf to endleſs torments. I will not give up my hopes of being one day pardoned."

"You will not? On what chimæra reſt then your hopes? Short-ſighted mortal! Miſerable wretch! Are you not guilty? Are you not infamous in the eyes of men and angels? Can ſuch enormous ſins be forgiven? Hope you to eſcape my power? Your fate is already pronounced. The Eternal has abandoned you. Mine you are marked in the book of deſtiny, and mine you muſt and ſhall be."

"Fiend! 'tis falſe. Infinite is the Almighty's mercy, and the penitent ſhall meet his forgiveneſs. My crimes are monſtrous, but I will not deſpair of pardon. Haply, when they have received due chaſtiſement——"

"Chaſtiſement? Was purgatory meant for guilt like yours? Hope you, that your offences ſhall be bought off by prayers of ſuperſtitious dotards and droning monks? Ambroſio! be wiſe. Mine you muſt be. You are doomed to flames, but may ſhun

them for the preſent. Sign this parchment: I will bear you from hence, and you may paſs your remaining years in bliſs and liberty. Enjoy your exiſtence. Indulge in every pleaſure to which appetite may lead you. But from the moment that it quits your body, remember that your ſoul belongs to me, and that I will not be defrauded of my right."

The monk was ſilent: but his looks declared that the tempter's words were not thrown away. He reflected on the conditions propoſed with horror. On the other hand, he believed himſelf doomed to perdition, and that, by refuſing the dæmon's ſuccour, he only haſtened tortures which he never could eſcape. The fiend ſaw that his reſolution was ſhaken. He renewed his inſtances, and endeavoured to fix the abbot's indeciſion. He deſcribed the agonies of death in the moſt terrific colours; and he worked ſo powerfully upon Ambroſio's deſpair and fears, that he prevailed upon him to receive the parchment. He

then ſtruck the iron pen which he held into a vein of the monk's left hand. It pierced deep, and was inſtantly filled with blood: yet Ambroſio felt no pain from the wound. The pen was put into his hand: it trembled. The wretch placed the parchment on the table before him, and prepared to ſign it. Suddenly he held his hand: he ſtarted away haſtily, and threw the pen upon the table.

"What am I doing?" he cried. Then turning to the fiend with a deſperate air, "Leave me! begone! I will not ſign the parchment."

"Fool!" exclaimed the diſappointed dæmon, darting looks ſo furious as penetrated the friar's ſoul with horror. "Thus am I trifled with? Go then! Rave in agony, expire in tortures, and then learn the extent of the Eternal's mercy! But beware how you make me again your mock! Call me no more, till reſolved to accept my offers. Summon me a ſecond time to diſmiſs me thus idly, and theſe talons ſhall rend

you into a thouſand pieces. Speak yet again: will you ſign the parchment?"

"I will not. Leave me. Away!"

Inſtantly the thunder was heard to roll horribly: once more the earth trembled with violence: the dungeon reſounded with loud ſhrieks, and the dæmon fled with blaſphemy and curſes.

At firſt, the monk rejoiced at having reſiſted the ſeducer's arts, and obtained a triumph over mankind's enemy: but as the hour of puniſhment drew near, his former terrors revived in his heart. Their momentary repoſe ſeemed to have given them freſh vigour. The nearer that the time approached, the more did he dread appearing before the throne of God. He ſhuddered to think how ſoon he muſt be plunged into eternity—how ſoon meet the eyes of his Creator, whom he had ſo grievouſly offended. The bell announced midnight. It was the ſignal for being led to the ſtake. As he liſtened to the firſt ſtroke, the blood ceaſed to circulate in the abbot's

veins.

veins. He heard death and torture murmured in each ſucceeding ſound. He expected to ſee the archers entering his priſon; and as the bell forbore to toll, he ſeized the magic volume in a fit of deſpair. He opened it, turned haſtily to the ſeventh page, and, as if fearing to allow himſelf a moment's thought, ran over the fatal lines with rapidity. Accompanied by his former terrors, Lucifer again ſtood before the trembler.

"You have ſummoned me," ſaid the fiend. "Are you determined to be wiſe? Will you accept my conditions? You know them already. Renounce your claim to ſalvation, make over to me your ſoul, and I bear you from this dungeon inſtantly. Yet is it time. Reſolve, or it will be too late. Will you ſign the parchment?"

"I muſt—Fate urges me—I accept your conditions."

"Sign the parchment," replied the dæmon in an exulting tone.

The contract and the bloody pen ſtill lay

upon the table. Ambroſio drew near it. He prepared to ſign his name. A moment's reflection made him heſitate.

"Hark!" cried the tempter: "they come. Be quick. Sign the parchment, and I bear you from hence this moment."

In effect, the archers were heard approaching, appointed to lead Ambroſio to the ſtake. The ſound encouraged the monk in his reſolution.

"What is the import of this writing?" ſaid he.

"It makes your ſoul over to me for ever, and without reſerve."

"What am I to receive in exchange?"

"My protection, and releaſe from this dungeon. Sign it, and this inſtant I bear you away."

Ambroſio took up the pen. He ſet it to the parchment. Again his courage failed him. He felt a pang of terror at his heart, and once more threw the pen upon the table.

"Weak and puerile!" cried the exaſpe-

rated

rated fiend. "Away with this folly! Sign the writing this inſtant, or I ſacrifice you to my rage."

At this moment the bolt of the outward door was drawn back. The priſoner heard the rattling of chains: the heavy bar fell: the archers were on the point of entering. Worked up to phrenſy by the urgent danger, ſhrinking from the approach of death, terrified by the dæmon's threats, and ſeeing no other means to eſcape deſtruction, the wretched monk complied. He ſigned the fatal contract, and gave it haſtily into the evil ſpirit's hands, whoſe eyes, as he received the gift, glared with malicious rapture.

"Take it!" ſaid the God-abandoned. "Now then ſave me! Snatch me from hence!"

"Hold! Do you freely and abſolutely renounce your Creator and his Son?"

"I do! I do!"

"Do you make over your ſoul to me for ever?"

"For

"For ever!"

"Without reſerve or ſubterfuge? without future appeal to the divine mercy?"

The laſt chain fell from the door of the priſon. The key was heard turning in the lock. Already the iron door grated heavily upon its ruſty hinges——

"I am yours for ever, and irrevocably!" cried the monk wild with terror: "I abandon all claim to ſalvation. I own no power but yours. Hark! hark! they come! Oh! ſave me! bear me away!"

"I have triumphed! You are mine paſt reprieve, and I fulfil my promiſe."

While he ſpoke, the door uncloſed. Inſtantly the dæmon graſped one of Ambroſio's arms, ſpread his broad pinions, and ſprang with him into the air. The roof opened as they ſoared upwards, and cloſed again when they had quitted the dungeon.

In the mean while, the gaoler was thrown into the utmoſt ſurpriſe by the diſappearance of his priſoner. Though neither he nor the archers were in time to witneſs the

monk's

monk's eſcape, a ſulphurous ſmell prevailing through the priſon ſufficiently informed them by whoſe aid he had been liberated. They haſtened to make their report to the Grand Inquiſitor. The ſtory, how a ſorcerer had been carried away by the Devil, was ſoon noiſed about Madrid; and for ſome days the whole city was employed in diſcuſſing the ſubject. Gradually it ceaſed to be the topic of converſation. Other adventures aroſe whoſe novelty engaged univerſal attention: and Ambroſio was ſoon forgotten as totally as if he never had exiſted. While this was paſſing, the monk, ſupported by his infernal guide, traverſed the air with the rapidity of an arrow; and a few moments placed him upon a precipice's brink, the ſteepeſt in Sierra Morena.

Though reſcued from the Inquiſition, Ambroſio as yet was inſenſible of the bleſſings of liberty. The damning contract weighed heavy upon his mind; and the ſcenes in which he had been a principal actor,

had

had left behind them ſuch impreſſions as rendered his heart the ſeat of anarchy and confuſion. The objects now before his eyes, and which the full moon ſailing through clouds permitted him to examine, were ill calculated to inſpire that calm, of which he ſtood ſo much in need. The diſorder of his imagination was increaſed by the wildneſs of the ſurrounding ſcenery; by the gloomy caverns and ſteep rocks, riſing above each other, and dividing the paſſing clouds; ſolitary cluſters of trees ſcattered here and there, among whoſe thick-twined branches the wind of night ſighed hoarſely and mournfully; the ſhrill cry of mountain eagles, who had built their neſts among theſe lonely deſerts; the ſtunning roar of torrents, as ſwelled by late rains they ruſhed violently down tremendous precipices; and the dark waters of a ſilent ſluggiſh ſtream, which faintly reflected the moon-beams, and bathed the rock's baſe on which Ambroſio ſtood. The abbot caſt round him a look of terror. His

infernal

infernal conductor was ſtill by his ſide, and eyed him with a look of mingled malice, exultation, and contempt.

"Whither have you brought me?" ſaid the monk at length in an hollow trembling voice: "Why am I placed in this melancholy ſcene? Bear me from it quickly! Carry me to Matilda!"

The fiend replied not, but continued to gaze upon him in ſilence. Ambroſio could not ſuſtain his glance; he turned away his eyes, while thus ſpoke the dæmon:

"I have him then in my power! This model of piety! this being without reproach! this mortal who placed his puny virtues on a level with thoſe of angels. He is mine! irrevocably, eternally mine! Companions of my ſufferings! denizens of hell! How grateful will be my preſent!"

He pauſed; then addreſſed himſelf to the monk——

"Carry you to Matilda?" he continued, repeating Ambroſio's words: "Wretch! you

you ſhall ſoon be with her! You well deſerve a place near her, for hell boaſts no miſcreant more guilty than yourſelf. Hark, Ambroſio, while I unveil your crimes! You have ſhed the blood of two innocents; Antonia and Elvira periſhed by your hand. That Antonia whom you violated, was your ſiſter! that Elvira whom you murdered, gave you birth! Tremble, abandoned hypocrite! inhuman parricide! inceſtuous raviſher! tremble at the extent of your offences! And you it was who thought yourſelf proof againſt temptation, abſolved from human frailties, and free from error and vice! Is pride then a virtue? Is inhumanity no fault? Know, vain man! that I long have marked you for my prey: I watched the movements of your heart; I ſaw that you were virtuous from vanity, not principle, and I ſeized the fit moment of ſeduction. I obſerved your blind idolatry of the Madona's picture. I bade a ſubordinate but crafty ſpirit aſſume a ſimilar form, and you eagerly yielded to

the

the blandiſhments of Matilda. Your pride was gratified by her flattery; your luſt only needed an opportunity to break forth; you ran into the ſnare blindly, and ſcrupled not to commit a crime, which you blamed in another with unfeeling ſeverity. It was I who threw Matilda in your way; it was I who gave you entrance to Antonia's chamber; it was I who cauſed the dagger to be given you which pierced your ſiſter's boſom; and it was I who warned Elvira in dreams of your deſigns upon her daughter, and thus, by preventing your profiting by her ſleep, compelled you to add rape as well as inceſt to the catalogue of your crimes. Hear, hear, Ambroſio! Had you reſiſted me one minute longer, you had ſaved your body and ſoul. The guards whom you heard at your priſon-door, came to ſignify your pardon. But I had already triumphed: my plots had already ſucceeded. Scarcely could I propoſe crimes ſo quick as you performed them. You are mine, and Heaven itſelf cannot reſcue you

from my power. Hope not that your penitence will make void our contract. Here is your bond ſigned with your blood; you have given up your claim to mercy, and nothing can reſtore to you the rights which you have fooliſhly reſigned. Believe you that your ſecret thoughts eſcaped me? No, no, I read them all! You truſted that you ſhould ſtill have time for repentance. I ſaw your artifice, knew its falſity, and rejoiced in deceiving the deceiver! You are mine beyond reprieve: I burn to poſſeſs my right, and alive you quit not theſe mountains."

During the dæmon's ſpeech, Ambroſio had been ſtupefied by terror and ſurpriſe. This laſt declaration roufed him.

"Not quit theſe mountains alive?" he exclaimed: "Perfidious, what mean you? Have you forgotten our contract?"

The fiend anſwered by a malicious laugh:

"Our contract? Have I not performed my part? What more did I promiſe than to

ſave

ſave you from your priſon? Have I not done ſo? Are you not ſafe from the Inquiſition—ſafe from all but from me? Fool that you were to confide yourſelf to a devil! Why did you not ſtipulate for life, and power, and pleaſure? Then all would have been granted: now, your reflections come too late. Miſcreant, prepare for death; you have not many hours to live!"

On hearing this ſentence, dreadful were the feelings of the devoted wretch! He ſank upon his knees, and raiſed his hands towards heaven. The fiend read his intention, and prevented it——

"What?" he cried, darting at him a look of fury: "Dare you ſtill implore the Eternal's mercy? Would you feign penitence, and again act an hypocrite's part? Villain, reſign your hopes of pardon. Thus I ſecure my prey!"

As he ſaid this, darting his talons into the monk's ſhaven crown, he ſprang with him from the rock. The caves and mountains rang with Ambroſio's ſhrieks. The dæmon

continued to ſoar aloft, ſtill, reaching a dreadful height, he releaſed the ſufferer. Headlong fell the monk through the airy waſte; the ſharp point of a rock received him; and he rolled from precipice to precipice, till, bruiſed and mangled, he reſted on the river's banks. Inſtantly a violent ſtorm aroſe: the winds in fury rent up rocks and foreſts: the ſky was now black with clouds, now ſheeted with fire: the rain fell in torrents; it ſwelled the ſtream; the waves overflowed their banks; they reached the ſpot where Ambroſio lay, and, when they abated, carried with them into the river the corſe of the deſpairing monk.

Haughty Lady, why ſhrunk you back when yon poor frail-one drew near? Was the air infected by her errors? Was your purity ſoiled by her paſſing breath? Ah! Lady, ſmooth that inſulting brow: ſtifle

the reproach juſt burſting from your ſcornful lip: wound not a ſoul, that bleeds already! She has ſuffered, ſuffers ſtill. Her air is gay, but her heart is broken; her dreſs ſparkles, but her boſom groans.

Lady, to look with mercy on the conduct of others, is a virtue no leſs than to look with ſeverity on your own.

FINIS.

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